

**FOOTBALL '88
PREVIEW**
43 Pages of Inside Info

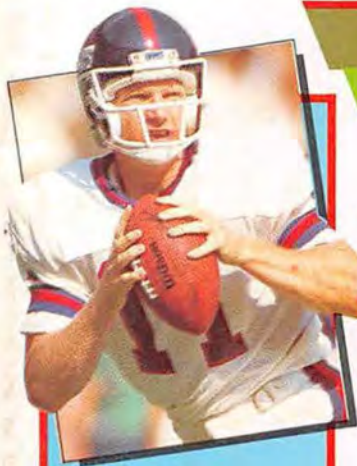
INSIDE

SPORTS

VOLUME TEN

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Our Super Bowl Pick: Giants vs. Browns
Our College Pick: Why Florida St. Is No. 1



PHIL SIMMS
New York Giants



BERNIE KOSAR
Cleveland Browns



RODNEY PEETE
USC



SAMMIE SMITH
Florida State

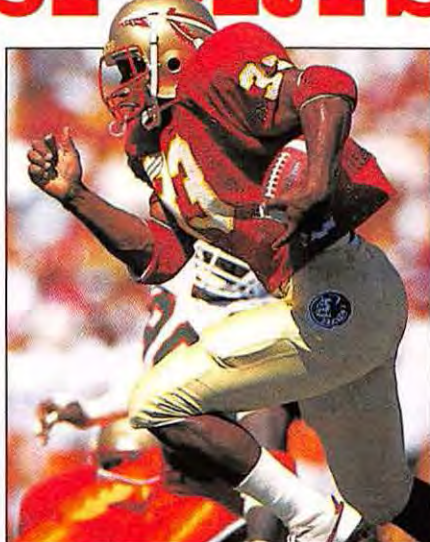
FOOTBALL '88 NFL & COLLEGE PREVIEW

OUR COLLEGE PICKS

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Florida St. | 8. Iowa | 15. Georgia |
| 2. USC | 9. Miami | 16. Penn St. |
| 3. Oklahoma | 10. Nebraska | 17. Texas |
| 4. Clemson | 11. Auburn | 18. Tennessee |
| 5. Notre Dame | 12. S. Carolina | 19. Michigan St. |
| 6. Texas A&M | 13. Michigan | 20. Washington |
| 7. UCLA | 14. Arkansas | |

AFC East: Buffalo Bills
AFC Central: Cleveland Browns
AFC West: Denver Broncos



**Giant comeback in the NFC, page 26****Have faith in FSU, page 50****Does Bo fit in with L.A.? page 72**

FEATURES

20 Interview: Wilber Marshall

The Redskins linebacker lashes out at his old team, the Bears

By TOM FRIEND

1988 NFL & COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

26 NFC Preview: A Giant Return

The New York Giants will overcome last year's disaster
NFC East: Super Bowl champion Redskins will be nosed out
NFC Central: Vikings to end the Bears divisional dominance
NFC West: The Saints prove that last year was no fluke

38 AFC Preview: Dawg Days Are Over

After two heartbreakers, the third time is a charm for Cleveland
AFC East: The rejuvenated Bills will capture their first title in eight years
AFC Central: Houston challenges the Browns in this now-tough division
AFC West: Denver makes it three in a row, but look out for the Raiders
NFL Previews by: Steve Bisheff, Larry Dorman, Rich Hofmann, Bob Kravitz, and Paul Ladewski

50 College Preview: Florida St. Is No. 1

Bobby Bowden inspires his Seminoles to their first national crown
By HANK NUWER

57 College Football Top 20: USC Challenges for the Title

- ☐ Iowa to bounce back and win the Big Ten
- ☐ Auburn to nose out Georgia in the Southeastern Conference
- ☐ Sooners to do it again in Big Eight

College Previews by: Phil Axelrod, Terry Boers, David Davidson, Ron Green Jr., Randy Holtz, Jeff Miller, and Nick Peters

72 Back to the Future?

The L.A. Raiders just ain't what they used to be

By MIKE DOWNEY

DEPARTMENTS

7 Editor's Note

10 The Insider

Olden Polynice, Artist
'Eight Men Out'
Ed Correa's Faith

14 Media

Bob Trumpy
By BOB RUBIN

78 Numbers

80 The Good Doctor

82 The Fan

Eating Up the Dodgers
By DON RICKLES

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HOW TOUGH IS IT TO REPEAT AS NFL champion? The Washington Redskins will find out as the 1988 pro football season unfolds. Winning back-to-back Super Bowls isn't a task that's completely unfamiliar to the Redskins. They came close in 1984 when they reached the NFL title game for a second consecutive year, but they were routed by the Raiders. Still, that's the closest a team has come to establishing a two-year reign since the Pittsburgh Steelers won Super Bowls XIII (1979) and XIV (1980).

The Redskins are improved and certainly appear up to the task, but their competition in the NFC once again will be formidable. This month's "NFL Preview Special Section" gives you the scouting reports on all 28 NFL teams. We're predicting that the Redskins—



SIMMS

along with the AFC champion Denver Broncos—will fall short in their quest for another Super Bowl berth. We tell you which '87 playoff teams will be back in '88, and which teams will get a taste of postseason excitement for the first time in a while.

In the NFC, the Giants figure to be back in a big way. Phil Simms, Lawrence Taylor & Company appear to have regained their fire, and the addition of a couple of much-needed offensive tackles—rookies Eric Moore and John Elliott—should be the missing pieces to New York's puzzle. Washington, Chicago, and San Francisco will contend, as usual, but NFL fans will find out this season that the Minnesota Vikings and New Orleans Saints are for real.

Cleveland, led by quarterback Bernie Kosar, will be the team that emerges from an exciting AFC scramble. Bridesmaids to the Broncos for the past two seasons, Cleveland will be good again this year. The Broncos are strong, and the Raiders, Bills, Colts, Seahawks, Oilers, Steelers, and Dolphins all will be in the playoff hunt. Pro football writers Paul Ladewski, Rich Hofmann, Gary



BOWDEN

Myers, Steve Bisheff, Bob Kravitz, and Larry Dorman provide a team-by-team look at the NFL. That coverage starts on page 26.

One player to watch this year is Wilber Marshall, one of

the most talented linebackers in the NFL. Marshall is the subject of our "Inside Interview" this month, chatting with writer Tom Friend. The hard-hitting linebacker talks about why he left Chicago to join the Washington Redskins, his problems with Bears management, and his new attitude with the Redskins. Friend's interview begins on page 20.

On the college football scene, INSIDE SPORTS looks into its crystal ball and projects which teams will be the best in the land. There are several outstanding teams, but when the season's over, Florida State will stand alone at the top. The Seminoles, led by head coach Bobby Bowden, finished second in the nation last year, and they are just as strong. Contributing writer Hank Nuwer had an opportunity to visit with the old-fashioned Bowden, and the Florida State coach revealed many of the secrets for his success over the years. Nuwer's feature begins on page 50.



SHANAHAN

In addition, college football writers Phil Axelrod, Terry Boers, David Davidson, Ron Green, David Hyde, Jeff Miller, and Nick Peters provide team-by-team descriptions of the remaining 20 best teams in the country, starting on page 57.

What's happened to the L.A. Raiders? Why have yesterday's bullies become today's softies? Can new head coach Mike Shanahan turn things around? Author Mike Downey explores these questions and others in his analysis, which begins on page 72.

Michael K. Herbert

NOT-SO-STARVING ARTIST

Olden Polynice: Artistry on and off the Court

YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THIS GUY AND LOTS OF POSSIBILITIES pour into your brain. Let's face facts, he's seven feet tall and 245 pounds. Watch him move and you figure he's got to be an athlete. Maybe even a dancer.

But an artist?

Sure, Olden Polynice, back-up center for the Seattle SuperSonics, spends plenty of time in the paint—er, the lane. Considering his height, he'd also be helpful painting in your house for spots you only dream of reaching. And yet, when the thought of artist comes to mind, Picasso and Polynice aren't on the same page.

"Me not sensitive? C'mon," Polynice says. "I'm real sensitive. I'll



Polynice: 'I started doodling at age nine.'

never hit anybody unless they hit me first. Self-defense, you know?"

A finesse player, Polynice is not. Then again, on this evening before the Sonics meet the Utah Jazz, Polynice is beaming. "Hey, look at these," he says. "This is how I'm going to make *real* money."

Out of a bag roll T-shirts with a variety of women's faces and fancy designs. Olden Originals. The 1988 version of OP Art. This is how a guy with a five-year, \$2.4 million contract is going to get rich? Polynice says he can't use OP because of Ocean Pacific, so he's referring to them as Olden's Original Paintings, or Oops. But there is no mistake about this.

"Until now, everything I've done has been basketball related," Polynice says. "If I want to make some money, I've got to expand from that."

He has grown dramatically from the guy scamming to sell T-shirts at the University of Virginia. Instead of attending coach Terry Holland's basketball camp, he sold T-shirts outside that produced \$600 to \$700 a day. "I made a lot of money," Polynice says. "But I could have made a lot more money because I shared a lot of it with the guys who worked with me and didn't charge enough."

This was just the beginning, however, of Olden Polynice, entrepre-

neurial artist of the 1980s. Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1965, Polynice was raised in New York City with three brothers and a sister. No one pushed him into art; it was an instinctive urge that blossomed.

"It started with doodling when I was about nine," Polynice says. "I started doing faces and animals, then got into cartoon characters like Mickey and Bugs. Pretty soon, I started making my own stuff."

"I knew I was pretty good because I sent my stuff into one of those art school ads on television when I was 12, and they wrote me a letter back saying I was good and they'd like me to come to their school."

He didn't go. This was a pipe dream that remained in suspended animation. Mickey and Bugs were sketches for his room. He continued to grow and basketball became his ticket to college as his basketball skills refined much more quickly than his drawing. But one day, while strolling down a street in Manhattan carrying a sketch of an Indian, a man stopped him.

"He offered me \$75 for it," Polynice says. "What was I going to say, no? I was in ninth grade, so I took the money. Looking back, I would have asked for more money."

Polynice's Sonics teammates are adjusting to their young artist. During a team dinner on Thanksgiving Day in Boston, the table was set for children as well as adults, so Polynice took his crayons and went to work with his version of teammate Dale Ellis.

"They were all laughing at me," he says. "Then 10 or 15 minutes later, when they looked again, they got sort of quiet. They were all surprised, and said, 'Yeah, that looks like him.'"

Whereas a lot of guys look for endorsements, Polynice is hoping his Oops T-shirts take off with the benefit of only his own talent and imagination.

"The thing that adds to it is nobody believes me," Polynice says. "If there is anything I love it's proving people wrong. Most of this is my imagination anyway. This has taught me to be confident and concentrate. The thing was, nobody thought I was legit."

But these days, who's going to argue with him? —MIKE KAHN

HOLLYWOOD SOX SCANDAL

Sweeney Stars in 'Eight Men Out'

WHEN ACTOR D. B. SWEENEY WAS OFFERED THE STAR-ring role as Shoeless Joe Jackson in the movie about the 1919 White Sox scandal, "Eight Men Out," he didn't hesitate.

"Ever since I was a little kid I've wanted to be a pro ballplayer," says Sweeney, who played baseball in the minor leagues but never made the majors. "Now in this movie they're paying me money to hit a home run in the World Series."

No World Series was as full of drama as the one in 1919, in which eight members of the heavily favored White Sox had arranged with gamblers to lose intentionally. Jackson was one of those eight.

"Joe Jackson is a legendary figure," Sweeney says. "He's not as well-known as Babe Ruth, but he's almost as enigmatic. I knew

[Jackson] had the third-highest batting average in baseball history [.356], because I'm a Red Sox fan and I knew Wade Boggs was fourth. I knew he was reputed to be a great natural hitter. But I didn't know much about his game, so I went to the Hall of Fame to research him."

Although Sweeney knew he was the perfect actor for the role, there was a problem: Jackson hit left-handed and Sweeney had always been a righty.

"I decided to spend more time working technically on my swing. I thought it was important to develop a swing that was not modern, but still fluid. I'm sort of a student of Ted Williams and Charlie Lau as a hitter. I've read all those books. It's a much more technical and scientific method of hitting than existed in 1919. Jackson, not even

being a bright strategic hitter, would have been the kind of guy who went up there to take his hacks. So that was an interesting challenge, to disconnect my hands from my head, in a sense."

To get some work on his hitting, Sweeney spent some time last summer with the Kenosha [Wis.] Twins of the Midwest League, the Class A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins.

"I traveled with the team for six or seven weeks. Kenosha is a real shot-and-a-beer kind of town. I had [some privacy] there, whereas in any big city the teams have journalists bugging them all the time. Other teams would be less receptive to some actor they've never heard of before. Besides, Kenosha is very rural in its thinking, and I thought that would be better for me with the Jackson role.

"All the players were younger than me, which was interesting. They weren't too interested in the historical accuracy of playing a player who had been dead for 30 years."

Through lots of practice, Sweeney developed a solid left-handed stroke. He hadn't spent much time on the field since his days as a walk-on player at Tulane in the 1970s.

"I hadn't played ball in four or five years, but I felt like I could have played just coming off the street. I discovered that I might have been a left-handed hitter because I hit the ball farther left-handed than right-handed.

"For me [hitting left-handed] was incredibly difficult. I felt like I had developed an eye affliction. All of a sudden I was seeing everything backwards. The whole field was topsy-turvy. My feet wouldn't be where they belonged.

"The way I learned was mostly by hitting off the batting tee. I would hit wiffle balls off the batting tee in the hotel room for hours. I couldn't handle live pitching at all at first. By slowing everything down and making the ball stationary and practicing like one practices a golf swing I developed a pretty good stroke."

Sweeney believes his work paid off—in the form of a high quality baseball movie.

"The baseball action is unprecedented for its realism and excitement. I think baseball fans will be really happy with the movie on that level."

—LARRY BURKE

NEVER ON SATURDAY

Ed Correa Has Faith He'll Return

EDWIN CORREA IS SITTING OUT THE '88 BASEBALL SEASON awaiting a verdict on his future as a major league pitcher.

"God is deciding whether I stay in baseball or hang up my glove," says the Texas Rangers' 22-year-old righthander. "I probably won't get the answer for a year or so."

A devout Seventh-Day Adventist, Correa has tried to abstain from pitching from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. "It's our day of rest, our Sabbath," Correa explains.

Now the question is whether Correa ever will pitch again—on any day of the week.

Two years ago Correa was a rookie sensation for the Rangers. He led all rookies in strikeouts with 189 and tied for second in victories, a rookie club record 12. His strikeout total was the most for an American League rookie righthander in 16 years. Then came the arm blow-out.

After acquiring Correa in a trade with the Chicago White Sox, the Rangers carefully fixed their pitching rotation so he wouldn't have to pitch on his Sabbath.

"It was nice the way [manager] Bobby [Valentine] worked with me," Correa says. "He was so flexible. But then I found out I had pitched for three months with a broken arm."

What was thought to be muscle inflammation last May turned out to be a fracture of the scapula bone at the origin of the triceps muscle. Correa rested his arm until January, but in spring training the arm again blew out, putting him out of action, maybe permanently.

"Here I am with no history of arm trouble, 22 years old, without ever feeling a little bit of pain in my body, and with a chance my career could be over," Correa said. "It's a good thing I have my faith."

While his faith has sustained him, it has also made his major league career more difficult as he's tried to adjust to a 162-game schedule.

"I told the scout [in the White Sox organization] about my religion and he laughed," Correa says. "It broke my heart. In the minors I had to pitch on the Sabbath, and it hurt me. Finally, I was traded to the Texas Rangers and they accepted my religion."

He did pitch a few games for the Rangers during his Sabbath and believes it may have caused his injury.

"I have a feeling that one of the reasons I was hurt was because I pitched on the Sabbath," Correa says. "There may be no compromise of my religion the next time," Correa says. "I may never pitch on the Sabbath again."

—DENNE FREEMAN



Sweeney sports his Black Sox garb.



Correa: 'Saturday is my Sabbath.'

By BOB RUBIN

The Code Of Outspoken Bob Trumpy

A LINE FROM A SONG comes to mind when talking about Bob Trumpy's work behind a microphone.

You may have been a headache, but you never were a bore.

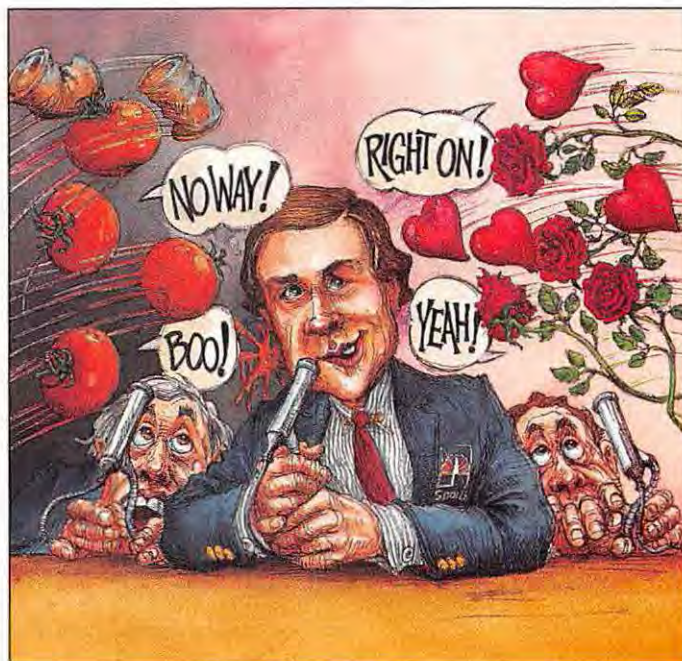
Trumpy, a fine tight end with the Bengals for a decade (1968 to '78), is host of a popular radio sports talk show in Cincinnati and he's NBC's No. 2 pro football analyst behind Merlin Olsen. He is the same at both venues. Outspoken. Opinionated. Blunt. At times, abrasive. At times, confrontational. At times, controversial. Sometimes wrong, but never in doubt.

"I don't see anything wrong with ticking people off," said Trumpy. "I'm sure I do offend some people, but I'm not there as a fan. I'm there as a paid, honest observer. Fans will make allowances or excuses for their team. I don't. It comes from my schooling as a player under Paul Brown. With him, it was either plus or minus. Either you made the play or you didn't. That's the way I broadcast. Plus or minus."

Ironically, Paul Brown, now the vice president and general manager of the Bengals, doesn't talk to Trumpy—hasn't since Trumpy accused him of interfering with and undermining coach Bill Johnson, who was fired five games into the 1978 season. Brown went so far as to ban Trumpy from the team plane. It's an old sore, but it has never healed for Brown.

"Paul doesn't forget," Trumpy said. "You get only one chance with Paul, and I guess I had mine. It's sad."

But Trumpy will not take back what he said. He believed it, so he said it. The



Sometimes abrasive, always honest, NBC's No. 2 color commentator for NFL football speaks his mind—like it or not.

consequences be damned. That's the way he broadcasts.

"When I started in this business, everyone said, 'Be yourself,' but I found that very difficult," Trumpy said. "I didn't know who I was or what to do in the context of viewing a football game. I'm not one for flowery language or painting pretty pictures. But I've always been very opinionated. So I decided that's what I'd do on the air, say what I think, express an honest opinion. Not malicious, not kind, not unkind, just honest. If a guy drops a pass or misses a block, I say it. Plus or minus."

Trumpy isn't diplomatic, either. Bluntness isn't unusual in the radio talk show business, where confrontation and controversy sell, but it's rare-to-unprecedented on national TV. When network analysts criticize, they

do so in muted, near apologetic, tones.

Trumpy rips.

Two years ago Trumpy was assigned to do Super Bowl XX between the Bears and Patriots for NBC radio with his longtime partner Don Criqui. As a guest on a popular Boston talk show, Trumpy was asked if he thought the underdog Patriots had a chance to win.

"Forget winning," Trumpy said. "I'm trying to figure out how they'll score."

That went over big with Bostonians, including the Patriot players.

"To say the least, they were upset," Trumpy said.

But Trumpy doesn't hit and run. He went out to Patriots practices so anyone with a beef could get it off his chest.

Quarterback Steve Grogan approached and said, "I heard your comments on the radio."

"Your reaction?" Trumpy replied.

"I hope you're wrong."

"I hope I am, too."

"You don't think we can win?"

"No. I just hope it's not the blowout I'm afraid it's going to be."

It was. Bears 46, Patriots 10.

The following year the brass at rival CBS were steamed when Trumpy blasted them for taking several long minutes to show a replay on a pass to Denver tight end Clarence Kay that appeared complete, but was ruled incomplete, in the second quarter of Super Bowl XXI. It proved important because on the next play John Elway was sacked for a safety to pull the Giants within a point, 10-9, en route to a 39-20 victory. Way too late, CBS came up with a shot that showed the pass had been complete.

As usual, Trumpy was subtle in his remarks about the delay. He called it "ridiculous" and "atrocious." "They have 23 cameras and 150 employees and it took that long to find one replay?" he said. "But if NBC had done it, I'd have said the same thing. Either you do the job or you don't."

Just so they shouldn't feel neglected, NFL officials have also gotten Trumped on occasion. One occasion that will always rouse Trumpy is use of the phrase "inadvertent whistle" to explain why a play was called dead that looks like it shouldn't have been.

"Inadvertent, my butt," Trumpy snapped. "That's a cop-out. I have the greatest respect for the officials, but not reverence. They make mistakes, too. Plus or minus."

Trumpy will take an unpopular stand. He debated fellow NBC-er Jimmy Cefalo during last season's NFL strike. Cefalo, a former Dolphins wide receiver, took a strong pro-union stand. Trumpy was equally strong in his criticism of the NFL Players Association, specifically its leadership, which was a gutsy position for an ex-player, given the high emotions of the strikers at the time.

"It [the union] is the most inept group I've ever come across, and it has proved that time and time again," Trumpy said. "I don't think they were truthful with the athletes. They gained absolutely nothing."

How did that play with the rank and file?

"Not too well at the time," Trumpy said, "but afterward it was unbelievable how many came up to me and said, 'We should have listened to you.'"

Trumpy shrugs off praise and pans from fans and the media. He learned that from former head of NBC Sports Don Ohlmeyer.

Trumpy had done a game in Minneapolis between the Dolphins and Vikings. A TV sports critic in Miami reviewed his work very favorably, but he was ripped in Minnesota. He told Ohlmeyer about it and got advice that has stood him in good stead ever since. "He told me, 'Forget what they said in Miami. Forget what they said in Minneapolis. I hired you. I liked what you did. Keep it up.' I took him at his word."

In other words, the only people Trumpy has to please are those in the executive offices at Rockefeller Center. They are pleased. "The best and worst thing about me is that I'm very secure," Trumpy said.

He's secure now, but there was a time he was anything but. Trumpy accepted a football scholarship to the University of Illinois, where he played as a sophomore. But he couldn't make the grades, so he dropped out. He went home for six months, joined the naval reserves, then enrolled at the University of Utah. He sat out one year, played football the next, then his unit was activated. Bad news. This was 1966, the height of the Vietnam War.

So Trumpy went to San Francisco to take his pre-induction physical. The floor was freshly waxed, and a doctor accidentally hit him in the knee with a chair.

"It dislodged a sliver of calcium under the kneecap, and I went down in excruciating pain," Trumpy said. "But the doctor didn't believe me. He started yelling, 'You're faking!' and had X-rays taken. Sure enough, they showed something under the kneecap,

'I'm not at the game as a fan. I'm a paid, honest observer. Fans will make allowances or excuses for their team. I don't.'

and I was given a choice between surgery or a medical discharge."

Hmmm. That's a toughie.

"Once I left the Navy the knee never bothered me again," Trumpy said. "It was the strangest damned thing."

Wrong. His route to the Bengals, which led to the broadcasting booth, was stranger. This just might be the prototypical twist-of-fate, right-place-at-the-right-time story.

First, back it up a little bit.

While still at Illinois, Trumpy and some fraternity brethren spring broke at Daytona Beach. The Trumpster was on the beach wearing an Illinois football jersey when he was approached by a guy who said he was going to try out as a quarterback for a minor league pro football team owned by the owner of the motel where they were staying.

Was Trumpy a player? Yes. Would he catch a few on the beach so this guy could impress the owner-owner? Trumpy would and did.

Afterward, one of Trumpy's pals mentioned in passing that two men, friends of the owner-owner, had been watching from the motel and had asked who the kid catching the ball was. Trumpy didn't think much about it, but he would have if he had known the identity of the two men. They were Sid Gillman, then coach of the AFL San Diego Chargers, and Al LoCasale, their director of player personnel.

Fast forward to Trumpy's final game for Utah, late 1966, against the University of Houston in the Astrodome. Now it just so happened the Chargers were in town to play the Oilers the following day. And it just so happened the Chargers went to the college game Saturday night to kill time. Finally, it just so happened Trumpy had one of the best games of his brief college career.

Fast forward to February 1968. Trumpy was married and in his fifth month working as a bill collector in Los Angeles when his wife called to tell him he had been drafted.

"That can't be," he said. "I have a medical discharge."

"No," she said. "I'm talking about the NFL. You've been drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals."

Though only a 12th-round pick, Trumpy was stunned. He wondered how in the world the Bengals knew he existed.

They knew because their new director of player personnel was Al LoCasale. And now you know the rest of the story.

Trumpy had begun his broadcasting career as part-time

host of a radio call-in show on WLW in Cincinnati in 1978. If you think he's opinionated and feisty on TV for NBC, you should catch him on radio. He provokes, harangues, ridicules, and insults—and that's to the callers he likes.

Listeners may occasionally scream at their radios, but they don't turn them off.

The road to success at NBC was as smooth as the road to the Bengals was rocky. He was offered three to six games in '78. He wound up working nine. He was scheduled for nine the following year and did 12. In 1980, he signed the first of three multi-year contracts. He's currently entering the second year of a three-year pact.

Trumpy is stuck behind Olsen, probably for as long as Olsen chooses to stay at NBC. But Trumpy says it's not a problem for him.

"The difference comes down to doing the AFC Championship Game and the Super Bowl once every three years," Trumpy said. "I don't think I lack for attention being No. 2. If I were behind someone I didn't respect, or if I thought there was never a chance of being No. 1, I'd probably look elsewhere. But I have great respect for Merlin Olsen. There's no nicer gentleman on the face of the earth. He's intellectual, he's gentle, he's . . . he's . . . Father Murphy—in real life!

"I'm more abrasive, more inclined to take chances, more out there on the edge. I'm hoping someday NBC decides it wants to go in my direction and I get a chance at No. 1."

As Olsen's longtime partner Dick Enberg would say: *Oh, my.* ■

BOB RUBIN, who writes the *Media column* for I.S. each month, also strives for objectivity. On Trumpy's rating system, the Miami-based writer earns a plus.

By TOM FRIEND

Wilber Marshall

On his own value: 'I'm worth a lot, right up there with L. T.'
On the Bears: 'They told me I was worth "minimum" to the team'
On Walter Payton: 'He thought I was a fool'

WILBER MARSHALL'S ARTS include tackling and tae kwon do, although it's the football that's making him rich. This spring the linebacker signed a five-year, \$6 million offer sheet with the Washington Redskins. That amount of money didn't make sense to Marshall's former team, the Chicago Bears. Chicago president, Michael McCaskey, fearing a jealous revolt from other Bears, figured it would do little good to match the offer, and Marshall was an instant Redskin.

Certainly, many Redskin players aren't thrilled by the bulk of Marshall's contract, but they do appreciate his talent. On one of his first visits to Redskin Park, players began calling him "Steve Austin, the Six Million Dollar Man," and—at times—he certainly seems bionic.

With his tae kwon do training, he is able to break cinder blocks in half with a swift karate chop, but agrees he has a much easier time breaking a lineman's block. His goal this coming season is to be league MVP, which is his way of shooting for the moon. Many believe the Bears were silly letting a player of his magnitude leave town. He is 26 years old, has been to two Pro Bowls, and says, "I can go to as many more as I want."

The eighth of nine children from Titusville, Fla., Marshall used to beg his parents for money, and when they began turning him away, he begged one of his sisters to go ask them. He eventually did janitorial work in Titusville, side by side with his father, but soon found football to be a smoother way to earn a living. Once out of the University of Florida, his attorney, Richard Bennett, used the fledgling USFL as a bargaining tool, and the Bears gave him such a lucrative rookie

deal that veteran Mike Singletary was a training camp holdout.

Singletary and Marshall teamed up to be a dynamic duo, but Marshall ultimately was in the shadow of Singletary. And when Marshall's contract expired after the 1987 season, he merely asked the Bears for a contract comparable to Singletary's—and was rejected. He vowed to go elsewhere, and so he did—the first NFL free agent to switch teams since Norm Thompson went from St. Louis to Baltimore in 1977.

So now he's in Washington, a city where football fans aren't yet quite sure who Wilber Marshall is.

"No, they don't know me," he said. "Even after I hand them [my autograph], they don't know who I am. I'm not a big name. Not around here. Chicago, yeah."

But he's not Chicago's anymore.

INSIDE SPORTS: You and your agent, Richard Bennett, had a game plan going into the offseason, didn't you?

WILBER MARSHALL: Yeah. We knew L. T. [Lawrence Taylor] had \$1 million-plus a year, and Boz came in making money, and he hadn't done anything yet. Maybe three or four years from now, Boz may be one of the best ones. I'm not saying he's not a good linebacker.

IS: When Todd Bell and Al Harris held out the entire 1985 season, did you have an inkling the Bears wouldn't pay you when the time came?

WM: Pretty much so. Todd was a good athlete, and it [the contract dispute] destroyed his attitude toward a lot of things. If you get paid well, you play as hard as you can and do what you have to do to win. But when you get stung like that, there's no way you

can come back and play [Bell was released by the Bears in May 1988 and signed in June by the Philadelphia Eagles]. I knew Todd's situation was similar to mine, but I was asking a heck of a lot more than Todd. I thought maybe there was a chance they might pay me, but when you look at things, there was no way they'd ever do it.

IS: Did the whole team get that feeling?

WM: Everybody was always saying, "Go for it, go for whatever you can get." That's the atmosphere the owners created. Even the Bears coaches asked for a pay raise, and they wouldn't even give it to them. So, that means [the owners] are tight with money.

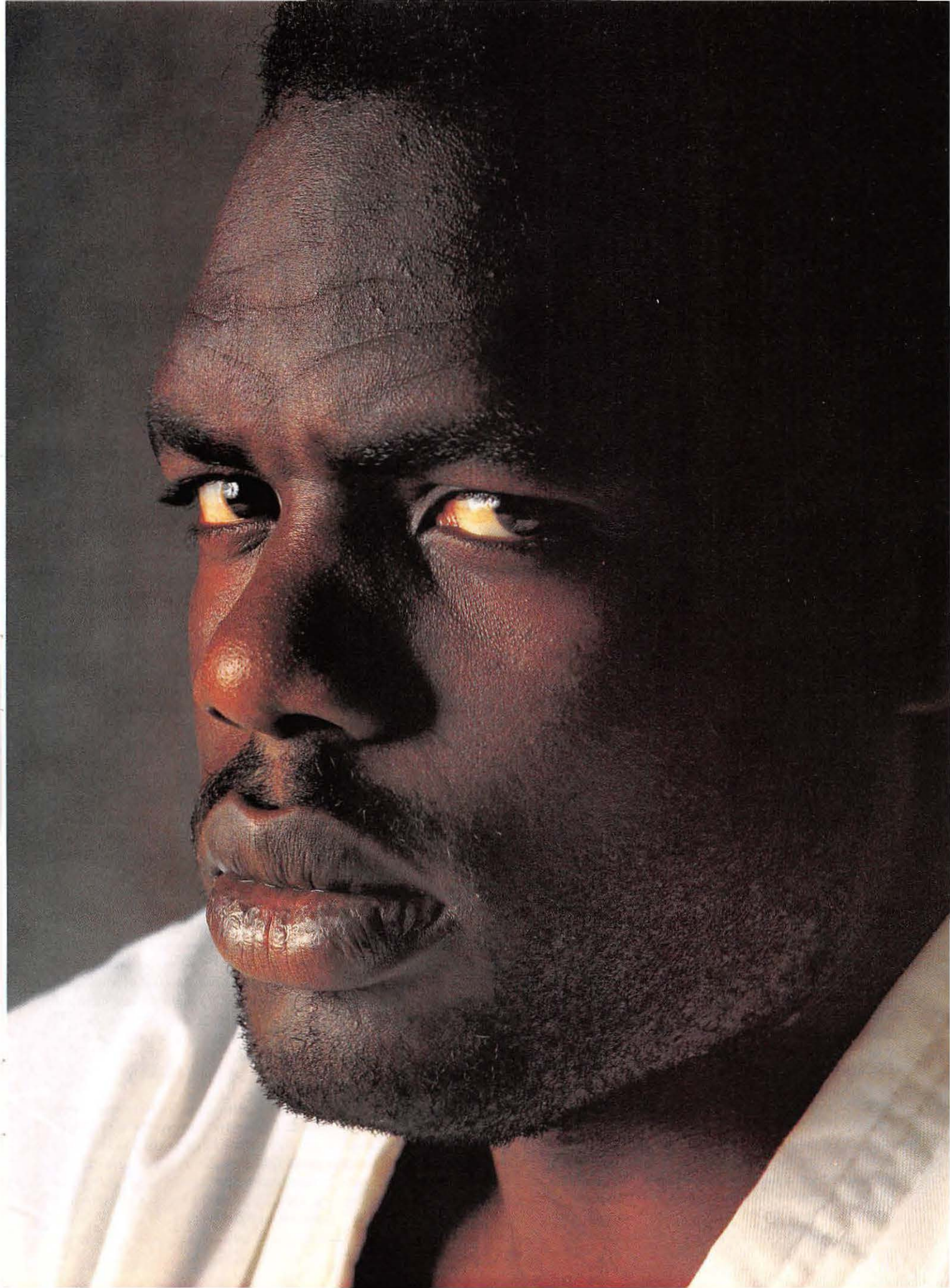
IS: Is morale on the Bears bad because of that?

WM: Yeah, it is bad. You want to bust it out there [on the field] when you know they care about you and know you'll get paid for it. Like the California teams. When you do something, those teams tear your contract up and write another one. You've got everyone in the country wanting to go out there or to a team like Washington that'll pay you to play.

IS: Yet, the year Bell and Harris held out you guys won the Super Bowl. So how bad could morale have been?

WM: It was just the talent that we had. After the Bears lost so many years and had so many No. 1 picks, you get the chemistry going. And [former defensive coordinator] Buddy Ryan knows how to handle people and knows the attitude of the players and what makes them tick. On the offensive side of the ball, I can't say. But, at that time, we believed no one could beat us.

'I look cool, but when it's time to go, I want to be the best.'





'This is a new challenge in Washington. It ain't a shoo-in.'

IS: Even after winning the Super Bowl, they didn't pay people?

WM: We thought they would. They [the McCaskeys] made a lot of money off the Bears, yet they still do what they did to Walter [Payton]. Walter's out of the game now, [but] my honest opinion is that Walter really wanted to play again. The way I look at it, they pushed him out, saying, "This is it: you played 13 years, now get out. The money's getting high now, a million dollars, it's time to get out."

IS: So, after the Super Bowl, they never went out and improved salaries?

WM: No, they didn't. Never. They never intended to. As of today [early June], they haven't signed any [of their 23 free agents].

IS: Have you talked to any of those guys?

WM: Yeah, all of them are waiting. Willie [Gault], he's wanting to get out. The Bears want someone who's going to appreciate what they do and play for the love of the game. To [these players], it's a business. When I did my deal, it was business.

IS: Bears coach Mike Ditka made it clear he wanted you back this year.

WM: He wants to win. . . . When you start losing good players—and I consider myself a good player, not a great player, not yet—the coach is the first one they get out of there. If you want to win, you've got to have talent.

IS: Why do you say you're not a great player yet?

WM: I've got a lot more to prove. A lot of people get to this point and think, "I'm making a lot of money, I can sit back." But there are other things I want to accomplish. I push myself every time I go on the field. This is going to be a new challenge in Washington. It ain't gonna be a shoo-in. If I can help them get to another Super Bowl, that would prove my feeling about myself.

IS: Why go to the Redskins?

WM: I talked to Joe Gibbs. He's a very intelligent guy. Quiet, but you listen to him talk and you can believe in someone like that. He makes you play harder. Mr. Cooke, both father [Jack Kent] and son [John Kent], they had the confidence in me. They said, "Hey, we'll do it. Don't worry about it, we'll get it done." They didn't worry about what the other owners would do.

IS: Yeah, Jack Kent Cooke isn't a very popular owner right now . . .

WM: I doubt it. But he's popular with me. He's real popular with me. He's opened things up for the players. People think I made a mark; I tell you, Mr. Cooke made a mark. It opened the game up a little bit, so people can move from team to team. . . . The Bears . . . if they can get someone cheap who will play for nothing, they'll do it. Because they know the public will still watch them play and they'll still get their percentage of the gross revenues. That's how they look at it.

IS: Do you feel you're worth \$6 million?

WM: I am worth a lot. I'm right up there with L.T. and players like that. I'm not going to count myself short. I want to be the best I can be and get as much as I can out of myself over the next five years.

IS: Was there anything specific, aside from money, about the Bears that made you unhappy there?

WM: If they'd have matched [the offer sheet], I'd have gone back. It's a job. I can't look at it any other way than that. The friends I made on the team there for four years, there are a lot of emotional things that I have to leave behind. That's tough for me. I came to Washington early to get away from those emotional things, knowing that my goal is to be the MVP. And I'm going to have to work. There are too many great players. Lawrence Taylor, Dexter Manley, Reggie White, [Bruce] Smith. You can go on and on. I have to be better than them.

IS: What did you think when Andre Tippett almost went to San Francisco as a free agent, as you did to Washington?

WM: I figured that'd be tough. How long has Tippett been in the league, nine years now? To give him a five-year deal, someone would be going out, well, not going out on a limb, because he is a good player. But you don't know how many years a person like that has left in him. Me being young, I've been to the Pro Bowl twice and I'm just in my fourth year. Everything is starting to happen.

IS: So you left the Bears because you just wanted what you felt you were worth?

WM: Definitely. I worked hard and during the season I told them, "Don't compare me to Mike Singletary. Compare the work I do on the field to anyone else in the league. You have me covering receivers, backs, running down on special teams. I make interceptions, score touchdowns. I can do a heck of a lot for a team." I said, "Just pay me for what you think I do for your team. What do you think I'm worth to this team?"

And they told me, "Minimum."

IS: Minimum? You mean not the regular 10% raise free agents sometimes receive?

WM: No, not even a regular raise. [Their offer was below] my regular salary. [Last year Marshall made \$400,000.] They went so low because they figured I'd go high, and we could meet somewhere in between. I told them, "I'm not going to negotiate with that kind of situation."

IS: Was this Michael McCaskey?

WM: Yeah.

IS: And was this during or after the season?

WM: During the season. He said, "We've got a guy who's been to the Pro Bowl five years [Mike Singletary]. We can't pay you more than we pay him." I said, "Well, that's it, then. I'll go looking for a job." He thought I was joking, obviously.

IS: What point in the season was this?

WM: Near the playoffs. I wasn't going to say anything during the season until we got done. They had some players who had two years left on their contracts, and they redid them [during the season]. I had three weeks [left in my contract]. I'm saying, "Why are they making me wait? Let's redo mine now, so I can concentrate and go through the playoffs and on to the Super Bowl." Then, they made all kinds of comments, they said I was moody because I don't talk to anybody.

IS: Your moods bothered the Bears?

WM: I'm my own person and I don't talk to everybody. But that's moody to them. I said, "OK fine. Now, I'm moody." I led their charts in tackles, hits, interceptions. I led their point-scoring system. I know Mike had been in the Pro Bowl five years, but I was their top scorer. [Singletary's] four years older than I am. You can't go by that. If I was his age, I'd have probably been to the Pro Bowl six years. Mike's a good friend of mine, it didn't upset me. Mike's been up there [renegotiating] every year. He'll probably go up there again. And Otis Wilson, who's in his tenth year, is not getting paid what he should get paid. The guy's a good athlete, and they come back and talk about what kind of person he is. . . . But they don't pay him what he's worth.

IS: Was Singletary someone you always had to deal with, always in his shadow?

WM: He's been in that [superior] position ever since I walked in the door. Mike's a great player, but I don't like comparing myself against him because what I do is totally different. He plays inside; he makes some big hits. . . . It's the Bears that compared us, compared the hits, which one hits the hardest. That's not it. It's which one gets the job done. And both of us do.

IS: Are battle lines drawn between players and management in Chicago?

WM: They try to call it a family, but right now, they're ripping it apart. I'm not there; Willie [Gault] has not signed, and they really depend on him with the deep ball. If he goes someplace else, they're in trouble.

IS: Can Ron Rivera take your place?

WM: Ron's a good guy, he can do it. He's more of an inside 'backer. He doesn't have the speed to cover. His talent is inside. He was real good inside when Mike got hurt.

IS: Buddy Ryan gave Singletary a lot of responsibility on defense. There was a great mutual admiration between the two. But your relationship with Ryan got off to a . . .

WM: Shaky start?

IS: Why?

WM: He didn't believe I could do the job. He told me [as a rookie], "You'll be a dominating player in this league. But right now you've got to learn the system and learn it the way I want to play." That's when the conflicts

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started. I play aggressive, but he wanted me to be more attentive to what I do until I knew the whole system. That was the problem.

IS: What is your impression of Ryan?

WM: He's a hot guy. If you don't do what he tells you, he'll yank you. That's why guys respected him because he expects you to learn everything.

IS: Did Ditka want you in there (as a rookie) when Buddy didn't?

WM: Yeah, but Buddy said I couldn't get the system down quick enough to play. . . . The next year, 1985, I had my best of my years there. But I didn't make the Pro Bowl.

Ditka's attitude would change, too. I'd get hurt, and he'd say, "You're soft, you can't play." . . . He's a good guy. He says a lot of things, but he's basically thinking about old-time football. All the brow-beating, the "you-do-it-my-way-or-no-way" stuff.

IS: Are Joe Gibbs and Mike Ditka very much alike?

WM: No. I made a comment about them being as different as night and day, but some people took it wrong. What I meant by it is that Ditka is such an outspoken person, and Gibbs is so quiet. I'm pretty sure Gibbs has his rough days.

IS: I think he knocked over a jug of milk at halftime . . .

WM: I heard that. But then, that's like night and day to what I used to see with Ditka.

IS: Didn't Walter Payton call and ask you to drop your no-trade clause so the Bears could match the Redskins offer sheet and trade you to the highest bidder?

WM: He presented himself as family, first. "Hey, how you doing, what's going on?" He had called some friends of mine on the team—four people. He was saying, "Where's Wilber? I'm trying to get in touch with him. Can you tell him I'm looking for him?" He tried all these places. I was in a shopping center, and got a call there. While I was getting clothes, I got paged.

Well, I finally called him from my car. I asked him, what's up. He said, "We're good friends and everything, but I'm telling you, this ain't gonna work. You better come down from what you asking. All the Bears can afford is a \$200,000 raise." I said, "Well, that ain't gonna get it."

I told him I'd take my chances elsewhere, and he said he didn't think it was gonna work. I told him I knew a lot of things he didn't know. This was before the Redskins signed me. I had some things going on around the league. It wasn't just the Redskins, but other teams, too. And he was trying to tell me no one would do it. He thought I was a fool.

IS: I thought Walter called you to ask you to drop the no-trade clause.

WM: Well, in Hawaii before I signed, he talked to me about not asking for so much money. He said no way it's gonna happen,

forget it. And I told him I had some things in the works, and he said no way. Then, I talked to him again when he was looking for me. He tried to call me. He said, "Look, [the Bears] are trying to make a deal. They want to trade." I said, "I'm not going to do that." I got the opportunity to pick the team I want to play for, because of their talent and the coaching staff. And that team would be willing to pay me. And they were the Redskins, Super Bowl champs. What more could I ask?

IS: How have the Redskins players taken to you?

WM: The guys have been receptive to me. All they want to do is win. They're class. I'm not saying all of them will be that way. Some know the way I play. Others are saying, "You've still got to get my respect." I can understand that. I want to win. I may sit back and look cool now. But when it's time to go, it's time to go. I want to be the best.

IS: How about when you play the Bears this year?

WM: It's just going to be something else. I can't really put it into words because I played with those guys so long. Those players believed in me, and they still do.

IS: Seems like you didn't really want to leave, did you?

WM: The players were good. I'd bring a handful of them with me, and we could whip anybody. That's how I felt. When I turned my back and somebody tried doing something to me, I knew I had help coming. I know it'll be that way in Washington, too.

IS: What was the transition from Ryan to [new defensive coordinator] Vince Tobin like?

WM: Before, we were a go-get-'em team. We had a situation for every other situation. Our defense could line up to any certain formation when we were playing with Buddy. Not having to switch to six defensive backs and leaving me in there to cover was the big thing Buddy did to throw teams off. Even if I'd line up outside and come from the corner, we'd roll the safety to play man-to-man. And when we've got an eight-man front and they see me coming from the corner, that's what keeps the two backs in. Nobody's flaring. Then you can double the two outside guys, and there's nowhere to go. But when you bring six defensive backs like Tobin did, [the offense] brings in three wides and backs aren't as worried about the blitz and can come out of the backfield.

IS: Is that the difference in philosophies, Tobin's six defensive backs in nickel packages?

WM: That was the whole thing. They'd take Mike Singletary out and leave me in the game and have six DBs. It'd make things really frustrating for the guys on the sidelines who'd always played. They changed the

system totally because they thought, "We can beat Buddy's system." A lot of players on that team today still think it would have been easier for Tobin to come in and learn [Ryan's] system than to bring in a new one. We could still run some of his plays, but also keep what we were used to.

IS: So, the Bears coaches started an us-against-Buddy mentality?

WM: Pretty much so. And people wanted to know, "What's wrong with the defense? They're not blitzing. And when they do blitz, they get beat." That's because our corners were brought in to play man-to-man, instead of a three-deep zone. They'd get beat on outs, and then teams ran out-and-ups deep. In our loss to Washington last year, I'd have put more pressure on Doug Williams, not let him step up and throw the ball. That's what he did. He had time to throw the ball. With those receivers, you can only cover them so long. This defense was so predictable. Every time we got inside the 20, we blitzed.

IS: Could you make suggestions and change calls with Buddy?

WM: Yes. With the new guys, you'd try, but they didn't understand what we were talking about. They'd say, "No, this is the way we'll do it. This is the way we practiced it." Buddy's philosophy was, "I'm not on the field. If you see something that I don't see and you think you can get there, we'll try it once. But if it doesn't work, we're throwing it out the window." With the other guy, there was no compromise. [Tobin] does compromise in some ways. But it was very hard for him. He was trying to establish himself.

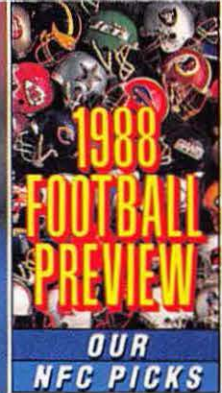
IS: Yet, in 1986, Tobin's first year, the Bears gave up the fewest number of points in the league and less than they did in 1985.

WM: Yeah, but the guys counted on pure guts. We ran some plays he didn't even know about. We'd see a certain situation. Mike [Singletary] or one of us would say, "Hey, let's run this!" We'd all get in trouble, but what difference did it make? When you're winning, you can do those things because the coach won't get as mad when things are working. But when things are not working and you pull that, it's all the players' fault. When we lost to the Redskins, it was the players' fault, not the coaches. At least that's how the coaches explained it. That's what they said to us. It was our fault.

IS: By the way, what'd you think of McMahon's wild hair and so on?

WM: That's part of making money. That's the business. I hope he can get everything from people. That's what it's all about—making money. ■

TOM FRIEND knows what Wilber is feeling, sort of. Tom is an All-Pro football writer who made the move east to cover the Redskins in '88. This is his first piece for I.S.



THE GIANTS STRIKE FOR ANOTHER TITLE



New York will overcome last year's disaster and outduel Minnesota and New Orleans to reach the Super Bowl

By DICK VERMEIL

As Told to Paul Ladewski

YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST: THE teams to watch closely this NFL season are the Cincinnati Bengals, the Los Angeles Raiders, and the New York Giants, with the Los Angeles Rams, New England Patriots, and Philadelphia Eagles not far behind. Dark horses? Try Pittsburgh and Phoenix. An analysis of key statistical categories indicates that these eight teams—the Bengals, Raiders, and Giants in particular—rate a close look. None was a postseason participant in '87, but by the end of the season each had approached playoff standards.

Statistics provide no guarantee, of course. Rather, they are indicators, and some are very accurate at that. The way I gauge a team's playoff chances is to take its points scored, yards gained, yards rushing, yards passing, yards per pass attempt, yards per offensive play, total running plays, total passing plays, sacks, and turnovers—offensively and defensively—and compare them to those of the average playoff team since 1978. If a team meets or exceeds playoff standards in roughly eight of the 10 categories—particularly on defense—that team is very likely to be playoff-bound.

When I did this statistical analysis on a New Orleans broadcast last season, I made the statement that the Saints were playing playoff-caliber football. Remember, this was a team that had never advanced beyond the regular season in franchise history. So my partner asked me, "How do you know that?" I replied that the Saints' statistical profile surpassed that of the average playoff team.

These aren't necessarily the 10 most important statistics in terms of winning, mind you, but they are the easiest for the average fan to understand. It's also good to remember that although the numerical difference may appear minute in a category, it is still important. I compare it to having the interest rate increased by one percent on a loan: It doesn't seem like much until you have to pay it.

Simms, the NFC's No. 2 passer in '87, was one Giant constant.

OUR 1988 NFL PREDICTIONS SUPER BOWL PICK: GIANTS OVER BROWNS

NFC EAST

N.Y. GIANTS	12-4
WASHINGTON	11-5
PHILADELPHIA	9-7
PHOENIX	6-10
DALLAS	5-11

NFC CENTRAL

MINNESOTA	11-5
CHICAGO	10-6
DETROIT	7-9
GREEN BAY	6-10
TAMPA BAY	4-12

NFC WEST

NEW ORLEANS	11-5
SAN FRANCISCO	9-7
L.A. RAMS	8-8
ATLANTA	4-12

AFC EAST

BUFFALO	11-5
INDIANAPOLIS	10-6
MIAMI	8-8
NEW ENGLAND	7-9
N.Y. JETS	4-12

AFC CENTRAL

CLEVELAND	11-5
HOUSTON	9-7
CINCINNATI	7-9
PITTSBURGH	6-10

AFC WEST

DENVER	10-6
L.A. RAIDERS	9-7
SEATTLE	9-7
SAN DIEGO	5-11
KANSAS CITY	5-11

NEW YORK GIANTS

THE NEXT TIME THE NFL IS ABOUT TO take a hike, its players and owners would be wise to remember the way the last walkout brought the '87 Giants to their knees. Few, if any, teams were hurt more by the strike, the scars of which remain visible a year later. You remember the sequence: The boys from New Jersey dug an 0-2 hole—there was no excuse for defeats at Chicago, which was without Jim McMahon, and Dallas at home—then were buried under a three-loss avalanche in non-union games. The A Team returned to finish 6-4 the rest of the way, but its Super Bowl chances had been snuffed out long before then.

Perhaps not unrelated, some bad habits resurfaced on the field as well. In particular, that old Giants bugaboo under Parcells: an inability to hold leads. They frittered away four games in the final quarter, including key divisional matchups at Dallas and Washington. More to the point, says safety Kenny Hill, "We panic, and we choke." Injuries played no small role, as 11 starters were sidelined at one time or another. And the running game, a strength in '86, became a concern after tackle Karl Nelson was lost to Hodgkin's disease, and Joe Morris and guard Chris Godfrey were slowed by injuries.

Rookie tackles Eric Moore, a deluxe pass-blocker, and John Elliott, a monstrous pile driver, are expected to fill the breach on a revamped front

line weakened by the retirement of tackle Brad Benson. Tight end Mark Bavaro and quarterback Phil Simms come off what were quietly the best seasons of their careers. And the Giants' defense, which ranked third in union games, remains the league's best security blanket. The question is, have last season's wounds begun to heal? This is the year the Giants will find out a lot about their character.

—PAUL LADEWSKI

Projected Record: 12-4, 1st in NFC East.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

THE YEAR AFTER. THAT IS WHAT THE Redskins must be ready to face.

It is a year of teams highlighting their

NFC STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

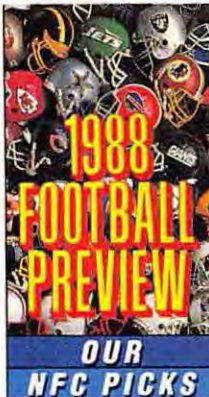
Below is a statistical analysis of the 14 NFC teams, based on a study done by former Philadelphia Eagles coach Dick Vermeil [see page 26]. Each team's 1987 statistics in 10 offensive and 10 defensive categories are compared to those

of the average NFL playoff team since 1978. The teams are ranked according to the number of categories in which they met playoff standards.

	Points	Opponent Points	Total Yds.	Opponent Total Yds.	Rush Yds.	Opponent Rush Yds.	Pass Yds.	Opponent Pass Yds.	Yds. Per Pass Att.	Opp. Yds. Per Pass Att.
SAN FRANCISCO	29.9	15.6	395.4	275.2	136.3	110.3	259.2	164.8	7.39	5.16
MINNESOTA	25.3	22.1	347.3	326.0	151.8	109.8	195.6	216.3	6.69	6.33
NEW ORLEANS	28.9	19.3	329.7	322.2	142.6	106.0	187.1	216.2	7.04	6.18
CHICAGO	23.1	21.1	353.9	300.3	130.3	96.1	223.6	204.2	6.71	6.06
WASHINGTON	25.0	20.4	369.2	344.8	133.2	114.3	236.0	230.4	6.89	6.66
PHILADELPHIA	25.2	24.0	342.3	344.2	142.4	97.8	199.9	246.3	5.88	6.22
N.Y. GIANTS	20.3	18.9	228.7	293.2	100.4	96.6	228.7	196.6	7.02	5.58
L.A. RAMS	21.3	23.3	315.1	342.5	138.9	115.3	176.2	227.3	6.18	6.73
DALLAS	21.2	24.1	338.8	337.3	122.9	106.6	215.9	230.7	6.11	6.89
PHOENIX	24.1	23.9	371.8	343.0	117.3	129.1	254.5	213.9	6.54	6.57
GREEN BAY	16.7	21.3	292.3	325.1	110.7	130.1	181.7	195.0	5.80	6.27
TAMPA BAY	18.5	25.5	307.8	346.9	87.2	148.9	220.6	198.0	6.00	6.58
ATLANTA	12.7	30.3	272.6	403.8	94.6	180.7	178.0	223.2	5.70	7.03
DETROIT	17.4	25.0	299.2	364.8	93.3	143.8	205.9	220.9	5.91	7.05
Average For NFL Playoff Team	22.3	18.1	332.1	311.7	134.7	117.1	197.4	194.5	6.10	5.60

	Yds. Per Play	Opponent Yds. Per Play	Rushes	Opp. Rushes	Passes	Opp. Passes	Sacks Allowed	Sacks	Turnovers	Opponent Turnovers
SAN FRANCISCO	5.6	4.3	33.2	29.3	35.1	31.9	1.9	2.3	1.8	2.4
MINNESOTA	5.2	5.1	34.9	27.5	29.3	34.2	2.8	2.8	1.9	2.8
NEW ORLEANS	5.1	5.0	36.5	25.7	26.6	35.0	1.8	3.3	1.7	3.4
CHICAGO	5.2	4.7	32.1	26.8	33.3	33.5	2.8	3.9	3.1	1.4
WASHINGTON	5.5	5.1	31.4	29.7	34.3	34.6	2.0	3.2	2.6	2.3
PHILADELPHIA	4.7	4.9	31.4	26.9	34.0	39.6	4.6	3.8	2.1	3.3
N.Y. GIANTS	4.9	4.2	30.3	29.7	32.6	35.3	4.1	4.3	2.8	2.0
L.A. RAMS	4.9	5.4	34.7	27.4	28.5	33.8	1.7	2.3	2.1	1.7
DALLAS	4.8	5.1	31.2	29.7	35.3	33.5	3.7	2.8	2.6	2.7
PHOENIX	5.2	5.1	29.3	31.6	38.9	32.3	4.0	3.1	1.9	2.1
GREEN BAY	4.6	4.7	29.1	35.3	31.3	31.1	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.8
TAMPA BAY	4.8	5.2	24.8	34.8	36.8	30.1	3.2	2.2	2.3	1.9
ATLANTA	4.8	5.6	22.8	40.1	31.3	31.8	2.8	0.9	3.2	1.6
DETROIT	4.9	5.5	25.2	32.9	34.8	31.3	1.4	2.5	2.4	2.2
Average For NFL Playoff Team	5.1	4.8	33.6	30.3	30.1	31.7	2.2	2.8	2.3	2.6

All statistics are per-game averages unless otherwise indicated.



games against you on the schedule. It is a year of testing your internal commitment. It is a year of finding a way to make the biggest push of your life all over again, just months after you made what you thought would be the push to end all pushes.

If you are the Chicago Bears, you try to do it despite the departure of your defensive coordinator, an often-

injured quarterback, and the distractions brought on by an offseason filled with endorsements of all kinds. And you fail.

If you are the New York Giants, you try to do it despite a key loss on the offensive line, a players strike that tears apart the middle of the season, and enough authors in the locker room to supply the Book of the Month Club for a year. And you fail, too.

If you are the Washington Redskins, you still might be hit by injuries or other misfortunes. But you also are off to a better start than your recent predecessors.

No books.

No mountain of commercials (other than quarterback Doug Williams telling everyone that he was going to Disney World).

"That's how this team is," veteran offensive lineman Russ Grimm says. "We're a bunch of blue-collar guys, and the only way we make a name for ourselves is winning things like the Super Bowl."

That, though, guarantees the Redskins nothing more than an even mental footing with everyone else in an NFC East, a division in which the New York Giants figure to approach their pre-1987 form and the Philadelphia Eagles figure to make a serious playoff challenge for the first time in seven years.

To stand still in this division is to risk third place.

That's why the Redskins have just about the best organization around. General manager Bobby Beathard boldly obtained free-agent linebacker Wilber Marshall from the Bears. He also got rid of running back George Rogers, clearing the way for Super Bowl hero Timmy Smith and for Kelvin Bryant, who's bulked up during the off-season.

The quarterback competition will be interesting. Williams—the other Super Bowl hero—is coming off another knee operation. Backup Jay Schroeder—trade bait all winter—sulked through his deserved benching last year. The Redskins have so much else in their offensive arsenal—including three superior wideouts in Art Monk, Gary Clark, and Ricky Sanders—but they still need the QB to make it go.

On defense, the athletic greatness of defensive end Charles Mann has finally been recognized through the swirl that normally surrounds Dexter Manley. The secondary is also full of excellent athletes. And now they have Marshall at outside linebacker.

Going in to 1988, the Year After looks quite promising.

—RICH HOFMANN

Projected Record: 11-5, 2nd in NFC East.

NFC EAST SUPERLATIVES

Offense	Defense	Special
WR: Gary Clark, Redskins	E: Reggie White, Eagles	PK: Roger Ruzek, Cowboys
WR: Mike Quick, Eagles	E: Charles Mann, Redskins	P: Sean Landeta, Giants
TE: Mark Bavaro, Giants	T: Dave Butz, Redskins	KR: Vai Sikahema, Cardinals
T: Luis Sharpe, Cardinals	ILB: Eugene Lockhart, Cowboys	PR: Vai Sikahema, Cardinals
T: Joe Jacoby, Redskins	ILB: Niko Noga, Cardinals	Best draft: Giants
G: Chris Godfrey, Giants	OLB: Carl Banks, Giants	Top rookie: Keith Jackson, Eagles
G: R. C. Thieleman, Redskins	OLB: Lawrence Taylor, Giants	Most overrated: Dexter Manley, Redskins
C: Jeff Bostic, Redskins	CB: Everson Walls, Cowboys	Most underrated: Earl Ferrell, Cardinals
QB: Phil Simms, Giants	CB: Darrell Green, Redskins	Coach on the spot: Buddy Ryan, Eagles
HB: Joe Morris, Giants	FS: Terry Hoage, Eagles	
FB: Herschel Walker, Cowboys	SS: Leonard Smith, Cardinals	

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

IF THE EAGLES ARE GOING TO TAKE THE next step—that is, the step to their first playoff appearance since 1981—then running back Keith Byars must be there.

If the Eagles are going to put some efficiency into a potent but sporadic offense, and take some pressure off a defense that has trouble against the pass, then Byars must be a major contributor for the first time in three years.

"I was talking to him," coach Buddy Ryan said during the offseason. "He was telling me that he was tired of everybody wondering when he was going to start playing like he did in college. Well, I told him that I'm tired of everybody asking me when he's going to start playing like he did in college."

In his first two seasons, Byars has yet to be healthy for training camp. Both times he was slowed after surgery to repair a broken fifth metatarsal bone in his foot.

Missing training camp has resulted in reduced effectiveness. Last season Byars rushed for only 426 yards. At times he seemed tentative in his attempts at turning the corner. Other times he was benched in favor of a better blocker.

"How can you get a correct assessment of somebody when they're not starting [the season] with everybody else? That's not fair," Byars says.

Fair or not, this year will provide the biggest test for Ryan and his rebuilt team. This is his third year on a five-year contract. Eagles owner Norman Braman has never said it out loud, but the popular wisdom is that Ryan had better come up with a winning record this season. Of course, Ryan will tell you that without the three replacement games, which the Eagles lost, the team's record was 7-5.

For the better part of a decade, the Eagles have been a team that scored 17 points per game and tried to hang on. Last year that changed in a big way. In the 12 union games, the Eagles averaged 25.2 points. It changed because of one man—quarterback Randall Cunningham, who threw for 2,786 yards, 23 touchdowns, and only 12 interceptions. In addition, his 505 rushing yards made him the first quarterback to lead his team in rushing since Bobby Douglass did it for the Bears in 1972.

With the addition of first-round draft choice Keith Jackson and supplemental draft pick Cris Carter, to go along with All-Pro wide receiver Mike Quick, solid fullback Anthony Toney, and a healthy Byars, the Eagles might have as many offensive weapons as anyone.

Whether a defense that gave up several million passing yards last season will be improved enough is a different question. Second-round draft pick Eric Allen from Arizona St. will help at cornerback. So will Byron Evans, the second-year linebacker who figures to be starting in the middle. The defensive line, led by All-Pro Reggie White and Jerome Brown, has a chance to be hellacious.

And if Byars is ready, he can do a lot to take the pressure off both Cunningham and the defense.

"He will," Ryan says. "You'll see." —R. H.

Projected Record: 9-7, 3rd in NFC East.

PHOENIX CARDINALS

HOW HOT IS IT? THAT IS THE QUESTION being asked from one end of the NFL to the other when the subject turns to the Phoenix Cardinals. The local fight over tickets was percolating nicely throughout the spring. The team had an unlisted telephone number to keep away the curious. On draft day, enigmatic personnel chief George Boone actually impressed some of the experts by drafting linebacker Ken Harvey. In all there's plenty to ask about these renegades from St. Louis. But there's only one real question.

How hot is it?

The Cardinals found out at an April minicamp, when temperatures soared to a record 100 degrees. That's a whole lot of soaring. They all say that it's a dry heat, but all that means is that you don't realize how quickly your blood is boiling.

"We're from the Midwest," wide receiver Roy Green says. "The humidity gets outrageous there and the temperature soars to 100 degrees. So that's comparable to the 112 that I understand it gets here. We are one of the better-conditioned teams. Coach [Gene] Stallings sees to that."

The team asked the NFL to tilt its schedule in such a way that more home games would be played later in the season. As such, the Cards do finish the year with two home games and have four in the last seven weeks. The NFL also threw Phoenix a Monday night bone for its home opener, September 12 against Dallas.

Whether this turns into the kind of home-field advantage that frigid Minnesota used to enjoy in the pre-dome days is unknown. Also unknown is what defensive alignment Stallings will use. Without any help along the defensive line from the draft, and with the addition of Harvey, Stallings is considering a switch to the 3-4. The stated need all along has been to improve the Cards' pass rush;

maybe they'll be able to do it with blitzing linebackers.

As for the rest of the team, quarterback Neil Lomax came back from a down season in '86 to play his way onto the '87 Pro Bowl squad. In the offseason he signed a giant new contract. That was the Cardinals' vote of confidence. We'll see if he returns the favor.

The Cards need the Lomax-to-J.T. Smith passing combination, because production from running back Stump Mitchell was down last season. Running back Tony Jeffery, the second-round draft choice from TCU, figures to push for a starting spot. A consistent running game would help, seeing how the Cardinals had a tough time protecting Lomax last year.

As for the defense, be it a 4-3 or a 3-4, the Cardinals don't intercept nearly enough passes. Overall, they are a tough team to figure. There is some promise, but there also are some disturbing holes.

But who knows? In Phoenix, maybe they'll get hot. —R. H.

Projected Record: 6-10, 4th in NFC East.

DALLAS COWBOYS

HERSHEL WALKER HAS BEEN A VICTIM of his own versatility. Tailback, fullback, wingback, split end. Walker has been everywhere.

Walker pleaded to be handed the ball, vowing good things would happen.

"I like to touch the ball a lot. I feel comfortable with the ball in my hands," Walker says. "Look at Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Dominique Wilkins. They get the ball and they know what to do with it. Without the ball, they're lost. I feel the same way."

The Cowboys abandoned the Walker-Tony Dorsett dream backfield midway through last season. Coach Tom Landry said it was the players' egos rather than the system that prevented a happy ending. They both wanted the ball, and the Cowboys couldn't figure out a way to keep them happy. So, in the ninth game, Landry threw out the computer printouts and made a choice. And it was Walker. Now, with Dorsett shipped to Denver, the success of the Cowboys offense depends on Walker.

In just his second NFL season, Walker became the first player in league history to gain more than 700 yards rushing and 700 yards receiving in two consecutive seasons. The Cowboys fully expect Walker to join San Francisco's Roger Craig as the only players to accomplish the double-quadruple: 1,000 yards rushing and 1,000 yards receiving in one season. As long as he stays healthy, it's within his reach.

"I don't set goals," Walker said. "I just want the opportunity. A running back has to have the ball."

Landry has little choice but to focus the offense on Walker. The Cowboys quarterback situation is a mess. They will start the season with the erratic Steve Pelluer, who they hope matures and builds off late-season victories over the Rams and Cardinals. If Pelluer can't hack it, Landry will go back to Danny White, who is 36 and still not fully recovered from the broken wrist he sustained in 1986. Landry is rooting hard that Pelluer comes through.

No. 1 pick Michael Irvin, a wide receiver from



J. T. Smith led the NFL in receptions (91) and yards (1,117).

Miami, will give the Cowboys an intermediate and deep threat, provided Pelluer can get him the ball. At this point the Cowboys can only dream about having on the field both Irvin and Mike Sherrard, who was their No. 1 pick in 1986. Sherrard, who missed all of 1987, refractured his right leg running on a beach last February. He will miss this season, and his career is in definite danger.

The Cowboys are coming off consecutive losing seasons. They have missed the playoffs three of the last four years. Randy White is being phased out, Danny White has been demoted, and Dorsett is out of the picture. These are the Cowboys?

The Cowboys have a murderous schedule, which includes five games against the past three Super Bowl champions, including an early October stretch of games against New Orleans, Washington, and Chicago.

If the Cowboys can challenge for a playoff spot despite having the NFL's third-toughest schedule, they'll owe it to Walker. They won't get there without an All-Pro season from him. "If people want to say this is Herschel's team, that's fine," Walker says. "I'm not going to say that. All I want is the ball."

—Gary Myers

Projected Record: 5-11, 5th in NFC East.

NFC CENTRAL SUPERLATIVES

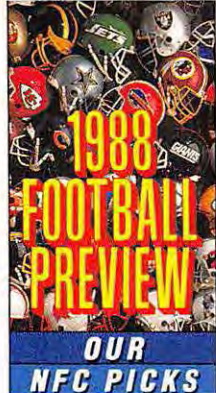
Offense	Defense	Special
WR: Anthony Carter, Vikings	E: Chris Doleman, Vikings	PK: Max Zendejas, Packers
WR: Pete Mandley, Lions	E: Richard Dent, Bears	P: Jim Arnold, Lions
TE: Steve Jordan, Vikings	T: Steve McMichael, Bears	KR: Dennis Gentry, Bears
T: Gary Zimmerman, Vikings	ILB: Mike Singletary, Bears	PR: Bobby Futrell, Buccaneers
T: Jimbo Covert, Bears	ILB: Scott Studwell, Vikings	Best draft: Buccaneers
G: Ron Hallstrom, Packers	OLB: Tim Harris, Packers	Top rookie: Bennie Blades, Lions
G: Tom Thayer, Bears	OLB: Jimmy Williams, Lions	Most overrated: Jim McMahon, Bears
C: Jay Hilgenberg, Bears	CB: Dave Brown, Packers	Most underrated: Keith Millard, Vikings
QB: Wade Wilson, Vikings	CB: Mark Lee, Packers	Coach on the spot: Darryl Rogers, Lions
HB: Neal Anderson, Bears	FS: Dave Duerson, Bears	
FB: James Wilder, Buccaneers	SS: Joey Browner, Vikings	

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR BOB Schnelker must feel like a mad biologist in a sci-fi horror story. His Monsters of the Metrodome wreak havoc until they get inside the 10-yard line, where they suddenly turn into zombies. It happened in the NFC Championship Game at Washington, where, on first-and-goal from the 3, the Vikings had three straight running plays stuffed. Instead of a 14-10 lead, they settled for a tying field goal. Then, following a Redskins

touchdown, a last-minute pass bounced off the hands of Darrin Nelson at the goal line. Happy endings aren't written about teams that treat the final yards as a trip to an oral surgeon.

The fourth-quarter sequence was a microcosm of the Vikings' season. In a key divisional loss to Chicago, emotional coach Jerry Burns disdained a late-field goal that would have given his team a four-point lead, and then watched a missed block lead to nothing. (Yo, Jerry, take the points next time.) Says quarterback Wade Wilson, "We've analyzed it, but I don't know what the problem is.



Maybe it's [a lack of] poise."

Or maybe the Vikings put the cart before the horse. They pack enough shiny weapons for goal-line combat—an all-purpose scatback in Nelson, a tank in Rick Fenney, a 'tweener in D. J. Dozier, a missile launcher in the mobile Wilson, and a fleet of gifted receivers led by All-World wideout Anthony Carter and Pro Bowl tight end

Steve Jordan. Fact is, offenses that grind out six points regularly must have human earthmovers up front.

Enter Arizona State guards Randall McDaniel and Todd Kalis, the Vikings' first- and fourth-round picks in the draft. Rated by many to be the best offensive lineman available, McDaniel wowed scouts at the combine workouts, where he ran a 4.58 in the 40 and had the best vertical jump of anyone at the position. At 6'4", 265 pounds, McDaniel has been seen jamming a basketball from a standing start—in full pads, no less. The NFL may not have a slam-dunk contest soon, but McDaniel should have enough stuff to become an immediate starter. Kalis, projected to last no later than the third round, could be a steal.

If the offensive line jells, the Vikings may have only themselves to fear. "We're too conservative," says Carter. "Our offense doesn't do anything out of the ordinary until the other team does it first. I say let the other team play catch-up football." That's precisely what the players told Schnelker and staff late last season at a watershed meeting. In their next five games, the offense exploded for 26 points and 371 yards per game. With that kind of imagination, it should be easier to picture these creatures in the Super Bowl.

—P. L.

Projected Record: 11-5, 1st in NFC Central.

CHICAGO BEARS

MAYBE THE STANDARD THEY SET was just too high. In 1985, on their way to the Super Bowl, the Bears gave up only 198 points in the regular season and had two shutouts in the playoffs. In 1986, although they lost a first-round playoff game, the defense was almost as dominating. Just 187 points, a record low, and 12 games of giving up no more than 13 points.

But in 1987 the Bears defense was torched seven times for at least 20 points and looked lost in a humiliating 41-0 loss to the 49ers. And to make it even worse, Chicago goes into 1988 without its best defensive player, linebacker Wilber Marshall, who signed as a free agent with Washington.

Good luck, Vince Tobin.

Tobin is the Bears defensive coordinator. He has been criticized for taking the Bears away from the 46 defense that Buddy Ryan made famous and going to a more controlled defense. After Chicago got bounced from the playoffs by the Redskins for the second consecutive season, even some of the players got on Tobin.

The Bears may take another step backward before moving ahead. It's a given that the offense is shaky because Jim McMahon is the most unreliable quarterback in the NFL. And with

Walter Payton retiring, the Bears have a leadership void even if Neal Anderson can make up for Payton's yards. The Bears have always relied on their defense. But now it might not be good enough to allow them to win their fifth straight NFC Central title.

Defensive end Dan Hampton and linebacker Otis Wilson will be 31 in September, Mike Singletary is approaching 30, safety Todd Bell was released in May, Refrigerator Perry will always fight the scale, and . . . suddenly the Bears defense looks vulnerable. "You're always concerned that the defense will get old on you," Tobin says. "We need to start replacing players."

Ron Rivera, who started six games last year when Wilson was injured, inherits Marshall's spot. But he's no Marshall and that leaves a big hole at the right outside spot.

The Bears always seem on the brink of inner explosion. If Mike Ditka is not ripping McMahon, then wide receiver Dennis McKinnon is ripping Ditka, or even Tobin. There is a fine line that must not be crossed, and the Bears are coming close. It hasn't hurt them the last four years, when they've compiled a 29-2 record against NFC Central opponents. But the division competition is catching up quickly.

The Vikings finished the season on a roll, barely missing the Super Bowl. The Bears, meanwhile, have not won a playoff game since the Super Bowl. When the season is over, they could be looking up at Minnesota.

"To say that this is not a very good football team

that has excellent possibilities of being a Super Bowl team, is foolish," Ditka said. "I'm proud of what we accomplished over the last four years."

That's in the past. The future is not quite as promising.

—G. M.

Projected Record: 10-6, 2nd in NFC Central.

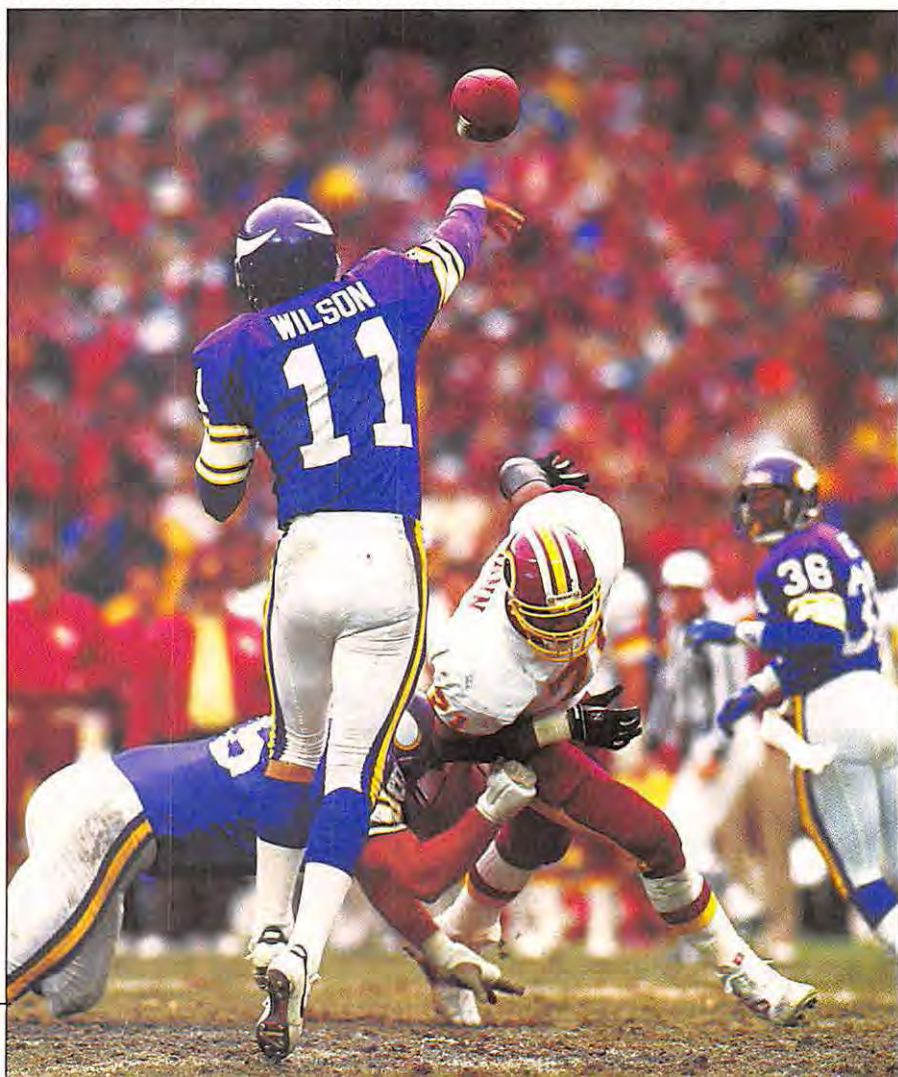
DETROIT LIONS

A FIRE DOESN'T START WITHOUT A spark, which is what the Lions' front-office shake-up could prove to be. Faster than you can say Silverdome Country Club, newly promoted personnel chief Jerry Vainisi labeled his players "classic underachievers," who lacked proper execution on the field. He also sent a message to head coach Darryl Rogers and staff: "If this sounds like faulty coaching, then that's what it is." Say, wasn't that what the rest of the NFL has said about the Lions for years?

There appears to be a madness to Vainisi's method. On the final day of minicamp, a group of veterans gathered the team to clear the air about its recent failures. Before the smoke settled, several players, including troubled defensive end Reggie Rogers, had their ears pierced by pointed words. "Some people got mad," says defensive captain Jimmy Williams, "but so what?" If this is what it takes for these guys to discover intensity, well, maybe they have to keep meeting like this.

The root of the Lions' problems has been as much structural as anything. Therefore, the best of the offseason moves may turn out to be Vainisi's

Wilson was a playoff star, but will he even start in '88?



1988 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

OUR NFC PICKS

partial takeover in the draft. Of Detroit's 10 first-round picks from 1978-87, a period when draft decisions were handled almost solely by the head coach, only offensive lineman Keith Dorney ('79) and running back Billy Sims ('80) earned Pro Bowl honors.

Defensive back Luther Bradley ('78) had many of his best days in the USFL. Wide-

out Mark Nichols ('81) and tight end David Lewis ('84) were wasted picks. Running back James Jones ('83) has been somewhat of a disappointment. The grade on Chuck Long ('86), the third-year quarterback, is incomplete. Williams ('82) and tackle Lomas Brown ('85) have been regular contributors, but you'd expect more from them.

The jury is out on Vainisi as a talent scout, but the Lions appeared to catch more than a cold from the last draft. First-rounder Bennie Blades will upgrade a secondary that at one time last season started four free agents. Linebacker Chris Spielman may lack speed, but the defense can use his intensity. Another second-rounder, Pat Carter, was rated as the best blocking tight end since Mark Bavaro. Even though the Lions' talent isn't indicative of their rankings—26th on offense, 24th on defense—it will take Vainisi another year to get his house in order before he succeeds GM Russ Thomas. At least the Lions won't be such good losers anymore. —P. L.

Projected Record: 7-9, 3rd in NFC Central.

GREEN BAY PACKERS

THE PACK HAS A NEW HEAD COACH, A new beginning, and the same old problem. The first-year boss, offensive-minded Lindy Infante, becomes the Pack's first boss since Dan Devine not to be part of the Vince Lombardi glory days. A clean break from the club's storied past

was as significant as it was long overdue. Devine, you may remember, was as loved in Wisconsin as spoiled brats. Yet he remains the last head coach to lead the Pack to a Central Division title. As Devine's successors, Bart Starr (53-77-3) and Forrest Gregg (25-37-1), discovered, it's difficult enough to catch Chicago and Minnesota without also having to chase the ghost of a legend.

On the surface, Infante and Green Bay look to be a good match: a creative mind for a team that ranked 25th in passing and 25th in scoring. As he did in previous stops at Cincinnati and Cleveland, Infante will employ multiple sets to force defenses to react. Here's the rub: The Pack doesn't have a proven quarterback. Although the system isn't quite as complex as it sometimes looks, it does place greater demands on the man at the controls. "The more he can do, the smarter he is, the more he can handle," says Infante, "the better we're going to be." Lucky Lindy had All-Pro Ken Anderson in Cincinnati and Pro Bowler Bernie Kosar in Cleveland, both of whom turned coaches into geniuses. However, the Pack's incumbents are named Wright, Majkowski, and Bosco.

Randy Wright has had hot flashes in his four-year career, but too often he resembles a hood ornament in the pocket. Don Majkowski, the 255th pick in the '87 draft, has switched from uniform No. 5, not that he made anybody forget Paul Hornung. The one to watch is Robbie Bosco, who appears to be over the arm problems that grounded the mad bomber from Brigham Young for two seasons. So encouraged—OK, who said desperate?—was Infante in the early workout program that he mentioned Bosco as a possible starter. "He and I understand one another," says Infante. "I could walk into the same room with the other guys, and it would be like [we were speaking] Arabic."

In any language, quarterback is the missing piece to the offense. Otherwise, the foundation has few cracks—surprising when you consider that only one team last season had a lower average base salary. First-round pick Sterling Sharpe, a

terror in the open field who thrived in South Carolina's Run-and-Shoot offense, joins burners Phillip Epps and Walter Stanley to form a solid nucleus of receivers. An underrated offensive line lacks notoriety but doesn't want for efficiency. If Kenneth Davis or Brent Fullwood stays out of the trainer's room long enough, either could emerge in Infante's one-back scheme. But until someone passes the test at quarterback, the Pack attack will be all dressed up with no one to throw. —P. L.

Projected Record: 6-10, 4th in NFC Central.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

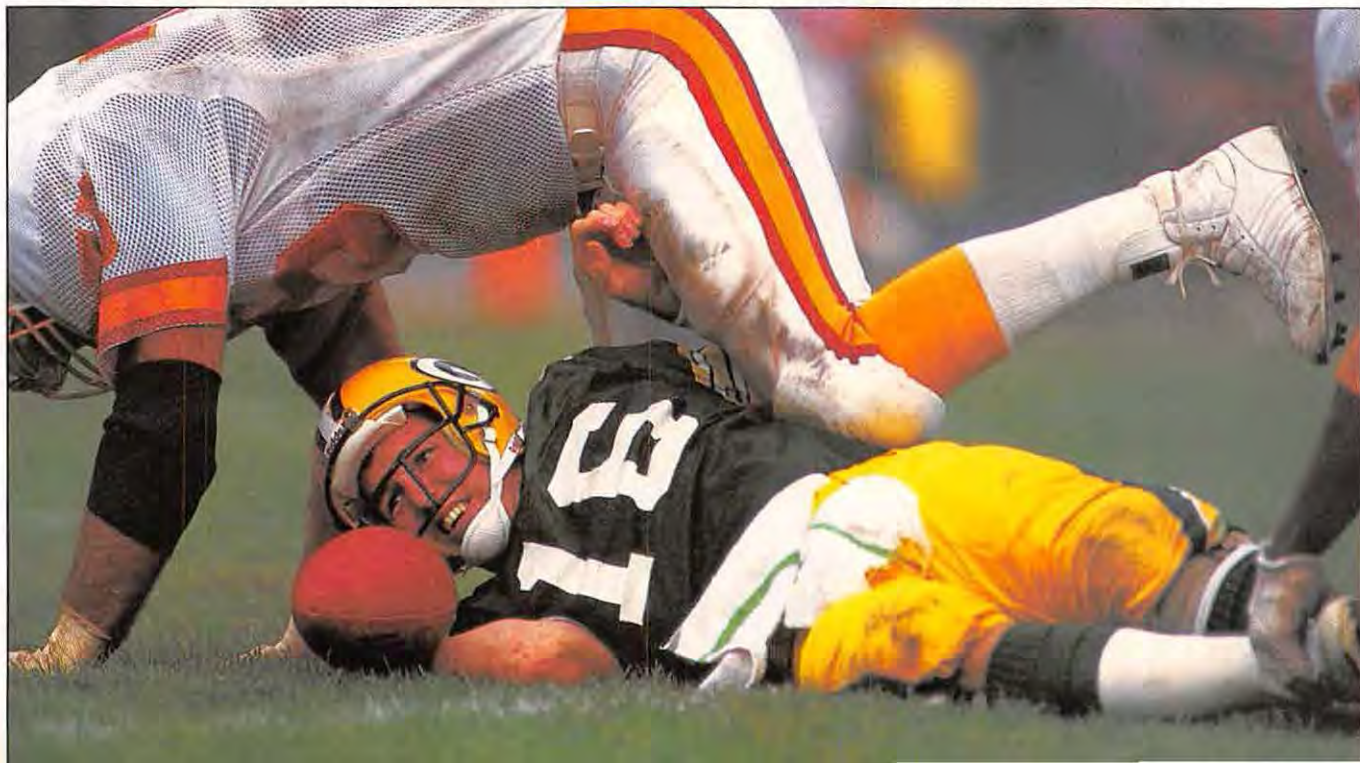
THE CARE AND FEEDING AND NURTURING of the Tampa Bay franchise—that is, of second-year quarterback Vinny Testaverde—is not a simple matter. Ability is only about three-quarters of the battle in developing a young thrower. The final quarter, the quarter that separates the great from merely the good, lies in this development process.

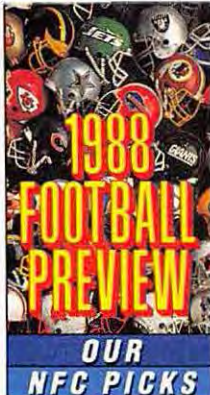
The master blueprint is the one used on Miami's Dan Marino. He was not thrown in to sink or swim while still trying to learn the terminology. Denver tried that with John Elway and paid for a while. Philadelphia tried that with Randall Cunningham and it retarded his progress. Miami let Marino watch for a while. They put him into situations in which he was bound to look good. And then, near the end of his first season, when he had everyone's name down and felt comfortable overall, he was put into the lineup. You know the rest.

Similarly, Bucs coach Ray Perkins is making all the right moves with Testaverde. He opened last season with veteran Steve DeBerg at the controls and allowed Testaverde the opportunity just to let it all sink in. Then, with four weeks left in the season, Testaverde was inserted into the starting lineup. He wasn't awful, wasn't great. He was a rookie, but he wasn't a panic-stricken rookie. Now Testaverde has experience on which to build in his first full season as starting quarterback.

When the Bucs traded DeBerg during the

Randy Wright's Pack will remain on its back if the team can't find Mr. Right at quarterback.





offseason, they lost an aging veteran at back-up, one who didn't make a lot of noise on the bench, but one who offered the appropriate wisdom when it was called upon. When the Bucs traded DeBerg, they needed a new old guy. The one they got was Joe Ferguson, a 15-year veteran. "I feel he will accept the role we are going to ask of him," Perkins said. "He provides the experience we need."

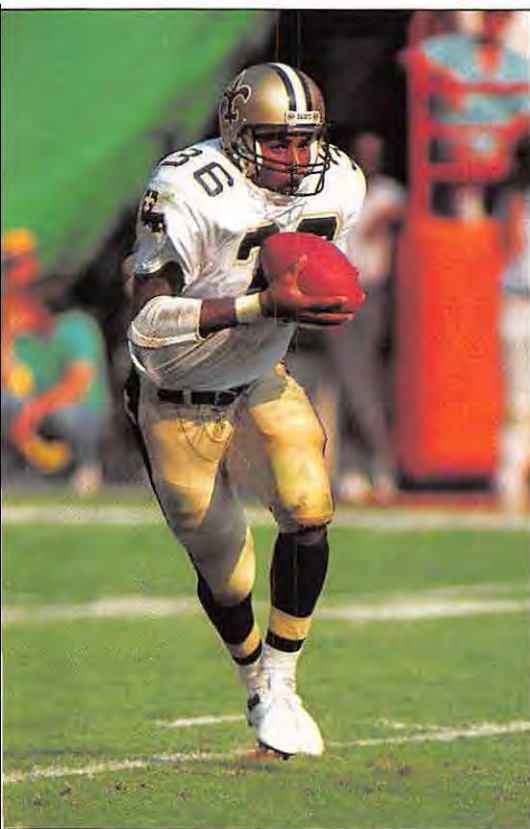
Next comes a fascinating move with limitless potential. Mike Shula—son of Don, brother of David, former QB for Perkins at Alabama, former back-up for the Bucs—has retired to become an assistant coach. He is nearly two years younger than Testaverde and 15 years younger than Ferguson, but the pedigree is there. He can relate to Testaverde on one level and, at the same time, he has Perkins' confidence and knows his philosophies. "I grew up with coaches all around me," Shula said. "It was only natural I'd become a coach. I've had the chance to see what it's like to be a head coach, what it's like to be an assistant coach, and I know what they go through."



Vinny can't go wrong with Shula and Perkins at his side.

All of this, though, won't be enough to save the Bucs. There are years and years of neglect here, and it won't be undone in one season. They didn't run the ball well last year and didn't stop the run, ranking 26th in the NFL in rushing yards gained and 21st in rushing yards allowed. That's a deadly

combination. Perkins worked his team hard last year and might have to ease up a notch if the players are to have any energy left in December—not that December figures to be a very significant month for the Bucs this year, however. —R. H.
Projected Record: 4-12, 5th in NFC Central.



Mayes has gained 2,270 yards in his first two NFL seasons.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

SAINTS GENERAL MANGER JIM FINKS has often said that the ideal situation for a football coach is to have his team win a game but play poorly. "That way," Finks says, "the coach can stay on their butts another week." That goes for entire seasons, too.

And so, this is the story of a dream unfulfilled,

of a successful season that fell short. It is the story of the New Orleans Saints in their second season under coach Jim Mora.

The Saints blitzed through the regular season with a 12-3 record (10-2 in union games) and made the playoffs for the first time in the history of the 21-year-old franchise. They were the Aints no more. But then the Vikings pummeled the Saints in their playoff opener in front of their home crowd, 44-10. There was no doubt.

And now Mora can stay on their butts another season. Still, while he talks about the need to improve, he doesn't sound as though he's ready to make major changes. There are no threats.

"I'm just going to throw out a number," Mora says. "If five true rookies could make our football team, I'd feel pretty good. I'm talking about our 45-man roster. If everybody stays healthy and five guys come in and beat out guys who were on our 45-man roster last year, I'd feel like we had a pretty good draft."

The Saints caused some fascination on draft day when they took Pitt's Craig Heyward in the first round and Lydell Carr in the fourth round, both running backs. The way the world read it was that

the Saints weren't counting on mainstay Rueben Mayes to come back from offseason knee surgery. But somebody forgot to tell Mayes.

"I knew there was going to be a lot of mystery in the air about me," Mayes said. "But as far as I'm concerned, I knew I'd be ready to go."

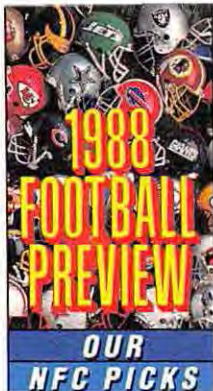
For his part, Mora downplays the notion that he is concerned about Mayes, who also has been bothered by an Achilles' tendon problem. "As of right now, if Rueben comes back like we think he will, there will be a talented group of guys back there competing," Mora said.

A stud running back would appear to be an absolute must for the Saints as long as Bobby Hebert is the quarterback. It's not that Hebert is a bad player. Last year he threw only nine interceptions and did a good job throwing a lot of ball-control passes. But the Saints don't want to rely on Hebert's arm to win games. They want to do that with someone else's legs—Mayes', Heyward's, someone's.

Of course, the only way to make that kind of strategy really work is with a stingy defense. The Saints do have that. Throw in special teams that ranked first in the NFL in union games in both punt and kickoff return yardage (led by returner

NFC WEST SUPERLATIVES

Offense	Defense	Special
WR: Jerry Rice, 49ers	E: Rick Bryan, Falcons	PK: Morten Andersen, Saints
WR: Henry Ellard, Rams	E: Bruce Clark, Saints	P: Dale Hatcher, Rams
TE: Hoby Brenner, Saints	T: Michael Carter, 49ers	KR: Sylvester Stamps, Falcons
T: Jackie Slater, Rams	ILB: Sam Mills, Saints	PR: Mel Gray, Saints
T: Harris Barton, 49ers	ILB: Mike Walter, 49ers	Best draft: Rams
G: Bill Fralic, Falcons	OLB: Rickey Jackson, Saints	Top rookie: Gaston Green, Rams
G: Brad Edelman, Saints	OLB: Pat Swilling, Saints	Most overrated: Tony Casillas, Falcons
C: Doug Smith, Rams	CB: Dave Waymer, Saints	Most underrated: Michael Carter, 49ers
QB: Joe Montana, 49ers	CB: Jerry Gray, Rams	Coach on the spot: John Robinson, Rams
HB: Roger Craig, 49ers	FS: Ronnie Lott, 49ers	
FB: Gerald Riggs, Falcons	SS: Vince Newsome, Rams	



Mel Gray) and the NFL's best placekicker in Morten Andersen, and it's easy to see why the Saints don't lose many close ones.

Now, all they have to do is figure out a way not to get routed in the big ones. Meanwhile, Mora will be on their butts. That is certain.—R.H.

Projected Record: 11-5, 1st in NFC West.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

THE NINERS MAY RATE AS THE TEAM of the '80s, but they're not a dynasty just yet. More like "Knots Landing." Or even another "Dallas." Following a 13-2 season without incident, the plot thickened when head coach Bill Walsh yanked quarterback Joe Montana in the playoff opener, a turn of events as shocking to some as the 36-24 loss to Minnesota. What's next for the soap opera by the Bay? Watch for these mind-boggling episodes.

"Two Lives to Live": A spoiled owner, played by Eddie DeBartolo Jr., blames Walsh, a Montana man, for the club's third successive playoff stinker. Together Montana and Walsh have won as many Super Bowls this decade as any other team. No matter. Eddie D. promptly strips Walsh of the club's president title, becomes more involved in the club's day-to-day operation (gulp), and shops Montana around the league against his coach's wishes. Will the simmering power struggle boil over and spoil the Niners? Or will the head coach and owner go the united way?

"Young and the Rested": When San Diego hedged on its offer of linebacker Bill Ray Smith and two No. 1 draft choices for Montana, the script was rewritten. Montana was the NFL's highest-rated passer a year ago, but at 32, he may be on his last legs. At least that's the way Montana looked before Walsh yanked him in the third quarter against Minnesota, explaining, "The chemistry needed to be changed." Translation: Montana is finding it difficult to sidestep a heavy pass rush. The heir to the Niners' fortune, good-looking, dashing Steve Young, could make Joan Van Ark melt. But though Young may be younger, stronger, and more agile, he lacks Montana's experience and discipline. Will the Niners continue to change quarterbacks as often as Joan Collins does clothes? Will the owner run interference for his fair-haired quarterback? Or will the veteran win against all odds?

"Search for a Pass Rush": The Niners ranked first against the pass, which is a bit misleading. Among NFC teams, only Green Bay and Atlanta had fewer sacks. One alternative is to blitz more, but that would put more heat on the Niners' talented-but-inexperienced corners. Will rookie defensive end Dan Stubbins, a possible second-round steal, have quarterbacks for sack lunch? Will the other second-round pick, Pierce Holt of tiny Angelo State, add some bulk on the line? How about the third-round pick, linebacker Bill Romanowski of Boston College? Or will the Niners still lack an intimidator?

Stay tuned.

—P.L.

Projected Record: 9-7, 2nd in NFC West.

LOS ANGELES RAMS

THE ERIC DICKERSON ERA BASICALLY ended when Dickerson suggested that coach John Robinson could run "47-Gap" himself if the Rams didn't double his contract.

"After Dick said that, I knew he would be running it someplace else," says guard Dennis Harrah, who retired after the season. And so, on October 31, the Rams dumped Dickerson, sending him to the Colts in a three-way deal that brought them three No. 1 draft choices, three No. 2s, and journeyman running backs Greg Bell and Owen Gill. With the end of one era, begins another: the Jim Everett Era.

Although Charles White took over for Dickerson and finished with an NFL-high 1,374 yards—inflated because he played in the three strike games—the Rams are diversifying their offense, putting a larger emphasis on Everett and the passing game.

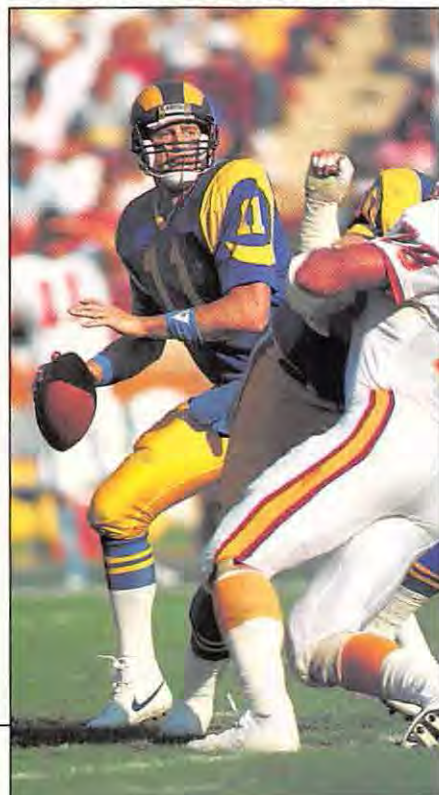
"The whole team needs to take on more responsibility," Everett said. "Eric is a great player and when you lose a person like that, it's tough. But this year you'll see a more explosive offense. The ball will be up in the air."

The Rams will rely more on speed—on the ground and in the air. Gaston Green, the UCLA running back who was one of L.A.'s two No. 1 picks, runs a 4.29 for the 40. His running style has been compared to Tony Dorsett. Wide receiver Aaron Cox, the other No. 1 pick, is just a step slower than Green. Receiver Willie Anderson, a second-round pick, also has world-class speed.

"From a young quarterback's standpoint, I couldn't ask for a better draft," Everett says. "We're talking about great young talent and we all have a chance to work together."

Everett completed 53.6% of his passes last year, but threw 13 interceptions to his 10 touchdowns. He's going into his third full season and everyone expects tremendous improvement.

With Everett, it's in one era and out another for the Rams.



"He has played 17 games and has come a long way," Robinson says. "In those games, we have seen a complete change in our passing game philosophy. Jim's progression was severely hampered by the players strike, but as the season wore on, Jim improved dramatically."

Robinson's worst record in seven years at Southern Cal was 8-4. In his first four years with the Rams, the worst was 9-7. So, coming off a losing season (6-9) is something new.

For the first time in a decade, the Rams have to worry about somebody else in the NFC West besides San Francisco. And to compete, Everett must take that last big step to give the Rams a dependable quarterback because Dickerson is no longer running 47-Gap.

—G.M.

Projected Record: 8-8, 3rd in NFC West.

ATLANTA FALCONS

SURE, AUNDRAY BRUCE, THE NO. 1 PICK in the NFL draft, will fill a gaping hole for the Falcons. But what about the other 21 remaining holes in their lineup?

This team didn't give up the most points, score the fewest, and produce the worst record in the NFL by accident. Obviously, Terry Donahue, Dick Vermeil, and all those other coaches who turned this job down knew what they were doing.

What these guys did in 1987 was ugly. They could use a clip of a Firecracker 500 car crash as the Falcons' highlight film.

Now they'll try to start again, with Chris Miller, last year's No. 1 draft choice, arriving in time for summer camp and a full season of on-the-job training. A strong-armed quarterback with quick feet, Miller didn't show up last season until October, after an extended contract holdout.

The big question is, can Miller help the Atlanta passing game mature soon enough to take some of the heat off Gerald Riggs?

Among the most powerful backs in the league, Riggs showed signs of slowing down last fall. The battering he's taken as the Falcons' lone offensive threat could turn him into the next Eric Campbell, a runner forced to quit before his time.

That would be unfortunate, because Atlanta features a couple of big-league blockers in front of Riggs in guard Bill Fralic and tackle Mike Kenn. The rest of the offensive line is adequate. The wide receiver position remains a cause for some concern. When tiny Floyd Dixon is the No. 1 target, there's a problem.

Speaking of problems, recycled coach Marion Campbell is obviously anxious to reshape a defense that has been getting worked over worse than Mike Tyson's sparring partners.

That's where Bruce, the millionaire linebacker out of Auburn, and Marcus Cotton, the No. 2 choice out of USC, will come in. Both are expected to become pass-rushing specialists working the flanks of Campbell's 3-4 defense.

Up front, the nucleus is respectable. Nose tackle Tony Casillas and end Rick Bryan are both former No. 1 draft picks, while Mike Gann, at the other end, was a No. 2. All have the ability. In the same division with the 49ers and Saints, it could take longer to rebuild this football team than it took to reshape the Atlanta skyline.

—STEVE BISHEFF

Projected Record: 4-12, 4th in NFC West.

CLEVELAND'S DAWG DAYS ARE OVER

The Browns will avenge two near-misses by reaching the Super Bowl



BUFFALO BILLS

BEFORE EXTOLLING THE VIRTUES OF the Bills, remember this: The AFC East is lousy, top-to-bottom lousy. What was a perennially terrific division has seen its marquee teams, the Jets, Dolphins, and Patriots, hit the skids.

But that's not to minimize the great strides the Bills have taken toward becoming the new beast of the East. This is a team of great promise, possessing the best young talent in the division.

Most of the focus in recent years has been on high-profile quarterback Jim Kelly. The former United States Football League star has not disappointed anyone, securing a spot in last season's Pro Bowl. But as his first two years proved, Kelly cannot win games alone.

So now the focus shifts to the defense, which went from mediocre in 1984 to marvelous in 1987. It's that defense, a precious commodity in the leaky AFC East, that figures to put the Bills over the top.

The defensive renaissance began with the development of Bruce Smith, the No. 1 draft choice in 1985, into one of the league's fiercest defensive linemen. But like Kelly on the offense, Smith could not do it alone, often facing double- and triple-teams.

Then came Shane Conlan, the terrific rookie out of Penn State, who shored up the linebacking unit when he arrived last season.

But the biggest acquisition came in the form of Cornelius Bennett—acquired in the three-way Eric Dickerson deal, involving the Rams, Colts, and Bills—who was drawing double-teams just 30 minutes into his first professional game.

Bennett, who appeared in eight games and started seven, made everybody better. His pass-rushing ability gave Smith more freedom. His presence allowed Conlan to move from outside to inside linebacker, where he flourished. Even old pros like Fred Smerlas seemed energized by being around Bennett.

This year the Bills will get a full season out of Bennett and will benefit from the experience gained by Conlan and fellow second-year man Nate Odomes at cornerback.

The offense is still looking to improve the supporting cast around Kelly. He possesses a strong arm, yet his longest TD pass went for just 27 yards, and his longest completion went for only 47. The Bills need a game-breaker and hope third-round draft choice Bernard Ford will fill that role.

The running game has done little to complement Kelly's passing attack. Robb Riddick is a

Byner and Bennett will clash in the AFC Championship Game.

gutsy, all-purpose back, but he doesn't strike fear into opponents' hearts. And Ronnie Harmon has been a disappointment. The Bills' top pick, Thurman Thomas, is being tabbed for the starting running back job, although concern remains about his knee.

—Bob Kravitz

Projected Record: 11-5, 1st in AFC East.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

RON MEYER MAY BE THE GREATEST fix-it coach in all of sports.

When he took over the Colts late in the 1986 season, they were 0-13. Somehow, Meyer coaxed three season-ending victories out of this lowly bunch. And last year, thanks to a blockbuster deal that reunited Meyer and Eric Dickerson, the Colts won the AFC East.

Meyer may have done a terrific sales job more than a terrific coaching job. He convinced his players they could win. He delegates authority to his assistants and acts more as an observer of the operation than a teacher. And he possesses the ability to get players to play hard for him.

How does he do it? Most important, he's had the opportunity. He has been hired by losing teams. "Very seldom are you fortunate enough in coaching to be offered a job at a program that is on top,"

he said. "They don't fire winning coaches."

Meyer accepted the head coaching job at UNLV in 1973, one year after the Rebels were 1-10. In Meyer's first season, they were 8-3, then 11-0 and 7-4. He recruited players such as Dickerson, Craig James, Russell Carter, and Michael Carter. SMU was 8-3 in 1980, Meyer's fifth season, and won the SWC with a 10-1 record in 1981.

Then came the Patriots. New England was 2-14 in 1981, the season before the fix-it man was hired. In the 1982 strike season, the Pats were 5-4 and lost in the first round of the playoffs. They were 8-8 in 1983 and 5-3 at the midpoint of the 1984 season when Meyer was surprisingly fired.

He was out of football until he was offered the

position of head coach of the Colts in 1986.

"The great thing about the NFL is it has a way of giving you a chance to compete," Meyer said. "You don't have to recruit. If you have the worst record, you get rewarded with the first draft choice. You have the first claims off the waiver wire and you are awarded the most advantageous schedule."

That's true, but trading for Dickerson didn't hurt, either. Dickerson played in nine regular-season games for the Colts after coming from the Rams and rushed for 1,011 yards.

How much did he help? "Let's put it this way," Meyer said. "Eric took his high school team all the way to the state championship. In his sophomore year, he took SMU to a bowl game and then two

AFC EAST SUPERLATIVES

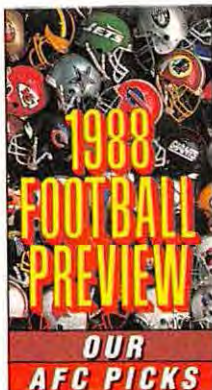
Offense	Defense	Special Teams
WR: Al Toon, Jets	E: Bruce Smith, Bills	PK: Dean Biasucci, Colts
WR: Mark Clayton, Dolphins	E: Garin Veris, Patriots	P: Rohn Stark, Colts
TE: Mickey Shuler, Jets	T: Fred Smerlas, Bills	KR: Albert Bentley, Colts
T: Chris Hinton, Colts	ILB: John Offerdahl, Dolphins	PR: Jojo Townsell, Jets
T: Bruce Armstrong, Patriots	ILB: Shane Conlan, Bills	Best draft: Jets
G: Ron Solt, Colts	OLB: Andre Tippett, Patriots	Top rookie: Dave Cadigan, Jets
G: Dan Alexander, Jets	OLB: Cornelius Bennett, Bills	Most overrated: Irving Fryar, Patriots
C: Ray Donaldson, Colts	CB: Ronnie Lippett, Patriots	Most underrated: Albert Bentley, Colts
QB: Dan Marino, Dolphins	CB: Ray Clayborn, Patriots	Coach on the spot: Joe Walton, Jets
HB: Eric Dickerson, Colts	FS: Fred Marion, Patriots	
FB: Roger Vick, Jets	SS: Mark Kelso, Bills	

AFC STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

	Points	Opponent Points	Total Yds.	Opponent Total Yds.	Rush Yds.	Opponent Rush Yds.	Pass Yds.	Opponent Pass Yds.	Yds. Per Pass Att.	Opp. Yds. Per Pass Att.
DENVER	26.1	18.1	390.4	323.5	135.8	136.6	254.6	186.9	7.27	6.10
L.A. RAIDERS	19.6	18.3	348.6	292.2	142.1	100.4	206.5	191.8	6.63	6.63
CLEVELAND	27.2	17.8	355.9	309.3	112.9	96.9	243.0	212.3	7.42	6.29
INDIANAPOLIS	20.0	17.6	332.7	316.5	144.0	115.9	188.7	200.6	6.36	5.90
SEATTLE	25.0	21.9	309.4	355.9	148.3	139.3	161.2	216.6	6.43	6.89
CINCINNATI	21.6	26.3	392.4	317.5	134.2	111.3	258.3	206.2	7.04	6.80
MIAMI	22.4	22.8	371.5	369.9	97.5	154.5	274.0	215.4	7.02	6.71
HOUSTON	23.6	25.7	346.5	357.8	123.5	137.2	233.0	220.7	6.99	6.65
BUFFALO	20.9	20.1	339.9	323.3	123.8	128.8	216.2	194.5	6.16	6.52
NEW ENGLAND	22.9	21.6	312.3	335.6	117.8	111.8	194.5	223.8	6.21	6.40
PITTSBURGH	17.9	20.8	279.3	341.3	133.4	105.8	145.9	235.5	5.03	7.10
SAN DIEGO	16.9	23.2	308.2	352.5	82.8	140.3	225.3	212.3	6.32	6.69
KANSAS CITY	19.9	23.8	314.3	368.5	121.8	148.6	192.5	219.9	6.40	6.66
N.Y. JETS	22.8	23.8	308.4	342.6	111.7	118.3	196.8	224.3	5.93	6.96
Average For NFL Playoff Team	22.3	18.1	332.1	311.7	134.7	117.1	197.4	194.5	6.10	5.60

	Yds. Per Play	Opponent Yds. Per Play	Rushes	Opp. Rushes	Passes	Opp. Passes	Sacks Allowed	Sacks	Turnovers	Opponent Turnovers
DENVER	5.4	5.2	34.7	29.3	35.0	30.7	2.0	2.3	2.3	3.1
L.A. RAIDERS	5.2	4.7	31.4	30.1	31.2	28.9	3.8	2.8	1.8	1.9
CLEVELAND	5.5	5.0	30.0	25.5	32.8	33.8	1.8	2.3	1.5	2.5
INDIANAPOLIS	5.1	4.8	33.5	30.0	29.7	34.0	1.7	2.3	2.1	2.7
SEATTLE	5.0	5.6	34.6	29.6	25.1	31.4	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.6
CINCINNATI	5.4	5.2	33.5	28.7	36.7	30.3	2.3	2.5	2.2	1.5
MIAMI	5.7	5.5	25.2	33.6	39.0	32.1	0.8	1.3	2.3	1.8
HOUSTON	5.4	5.3	30.7	31.8	31.9	33.2	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.5
BUFFALO	5.0	4.9	30.0	34.1	35.1	29.8	2.3	2.5	2.0	2.2
NEW ENGLAND	4.6	4.9	33.4	31.1	31.3	35.0	2.4	3.0	2.5	2.6
PITTSBURGH	4.4	5.2	33.4	31.2	29.0	33.2	1.7	1.9	2.4	2.7
SAN DIEGO	4.9	5.1	24.9	34.4	35.7	31.8	2.3	2.8	3.2	2.0
KANSAS CITY	5.2	5.2	26.9	35.4	30.1	33.0	3.3	2.3	2.6	1.8
N.Y. JETS	4.6	5.3	30.0	31.0	33.2	32.3	4.2	1.9	1.6	1.4
Average For NFL Playoff Team	5.1	4.8	33.6	30.3	30.1	31.7	2.2	2.8	2.3	2.6

All statistics are per-game averages unless otherwise indicated. See page 27 for explanation of chart.



SWC championships. In the year before he got to the Rams, they were 2-7. They went to the playoffs four straight years with him [and missed it without him in 1987]. Midway through last season, he was traded to the Colts and we made the playoffs. I think there is a correlation."

And now the Colts are suddenly looking down at an awful lot of teams.

—G. M.

Projected Record: 10-6, 2nd in AFC East.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

UNDER THE MERCILESS EARLY SUMMER sun on a practice field, a silver-haired man is churning out 40-yard wind sprints. He runs in the resolute manner of someone with something to prove, thick arms pumping and barrel chest heaving as the legs eat up the yards.

Don Shula's legendary jaw is set and his eyes are focused straight ahead. He doesn't look back. The sprints are his catharsis. With them, he beats back time and the memories of two straight seasons of mediocrity.

Mediocrity and the Dolphins were mutually exclusive for most of the 18 years of Shula's tenure in Miami. The team had won or shared first place in the AFC East 13 times. But over the last two seasons the Dolphins have posted 8-8 and 8-7 records. Defense and fire have been missing and these are the ingredients that Shula ponders as he runs.

"Nothing much has happened around here the last two years that any of us can be too proud of," Shula says. "We've had a few positives, but not enough. Now we have to continue to work to get better because the other teams in the AFC East have gotten better."

Work has always been Shula's answer. Dolphin players found this out again at minicamp. When it became apparent that all-world center Dwight Stephenson's knee injury was not responding well to treatment, and that he might not return to action this season, Shula plugged in Jeff Dellenbach, built up the kid's confidence with a series of complimentary quotes, and looked to the future with an eighth-round selection, Tennessee center Harry Galbreath.

Work and fire are the two certainties with No. 1 draft pick Eric Kumerow. Miami's pass rush last year was pitiful, its 21 sacks the fewest in the AFC. Enter Kumerow, a Shula-type player if ever there was one. While some draft experts dismissed the selection as a reach and characterized the 6'7", 264-pound Kumerow as a "Tweener," Shula talks about his versatility and coachability and smiles like someone who knows something you don't.

For the Dolphins' sake, he'd better come through. Because as good as the Miami offense is—and Dan Marino is very, very good—the Dolphins were largely a lethargic team last year. Even Marino seemed caught up in the malaise. He was still the fourth-rated quarterback in the league, but he was down from his '86 totals in almost every statistical category.



The loss of Collins is a major blow to the Pats' ground attack.

"With the strike and everything that happened last season it was a tough year all around," Marino says. "I'm not happy with my overall performance. I'm looking to improve."

The Miami offensive machine will crank up again, but can it overcome the old San Diego Syndrome from the Air Coryell era—all offense and no defense?

The sun is setting as Shula embarks on his regular afternoon job. He starts out toward the practice field and circles around behind a dormitory and disappears. You know he'll be back. You just don't know when.

—LARRY DORMAN

Projected Record: 8-8, 3rd in AFC East.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

EVEN FOR THE PATRIOTS, A TEAM with a history of upheaval, the newspaper dispatch was bizarre:

Tony Collins, the Patriots' leading rusher and receiver last season and the third-leading rusher in Pats history, was waived by the team. No explanation accompanied the waiver.

For even casual football fans, the unstated explanation was clear. Two weeks before his dismissal, Collins had been found by police wandering incoherently around a college campus. He has reportedly spent time in a drug rehabilitation center at least twice.

Earlier this spring Patriots coach Raymond Berry had said, "Tony Collins is one of the most complete backs in New England Patriots history. He's going to fill a lot of roles in 1988. . . . I would

have to rate Tony as one of our hardest-working players. He reports to camp every year in superior condition."

Ouch. But don't look for Berry to second-guess himself. In four years as Patriots coach, in the midst of front-office chaos and the sale of the team, he has compiled a 37-23 record for a .617 winning percentage. That's fourth among active NFL coaches.

Look instead for him to plug No. 1 pick John Stephens, the running back from Northwestern (La.) State, right into the spot left vacant by Collins. Berry is rapidly becoming like Don Shula, the coach he played for and whom now he regularly defeats. He refuses to agonize over what might have been.

Cutting Collins was an outgrowth of Berry's nonsense approach, which clearly has hardened even further as the Patriots look to return to the playoffs in 1988.

Getting tough on the field might not be quite so easy. Outside linebacker Don Blackmon, one of the steadiest performers on the defense, was forced into retirement with a neck injury. Steve Nelson, one of the best inside linebackers in the game for 14 years, also retired. Neither man will be easily replaced. As good as Andre Tippett is, he's liable to have problems with a green supporting cast.

There's nothing at all green about the quarterback. Steve Grogan is the crabgrass QB—no matter what you do, he keeps coming back. In his 14th season, Grogan is coming off his best season, but there is concern about his arm strength and

mobility. Tony Eason was injured and hasn't been the answer, and Doug Flutie isn't built to NFL specs. How about Tom Ramsey? Before the season's out, he may be in there.

One of the jokes going around the Patriots locker room during the offseason conditioning program was that all shoe contracts are now null and void since the team has been purchased by Paul Fireman, chairman of Reebok. Will everybody wear Reeboks?

No, but for at least another season, you might not want to be in the Patriots' shoes. —L. D.

Projected Record: 7-9, 4th in AFC East.

NEW YORK JETS

MANY ISSUES MUST BE EXAMINED IN the wreckage of the once-proud New York Jets. Let's dig the flight recorder out of the twisted metal of last year's 6-9 crash.

Flip the play switch. It sounds like coach Joe Walton talking through the static to his troops in the locker room toward the end of the free fall.

"A bunch of you guys are stealing money. You're not playing. You're a bunch of pea brains who won't amount to anything after football."

Good thing Joe was able to keep his wits about him during another winless December.

But the team has changed. Five veterans with a combined 57 years of NFL experience, not to mention \$2.1 million in combined earnings, are gone: nose tackle Joe Klecko, center Joe Fields, offensive lineman Gordon King, defensive end Barry Bennett, and punter Dave Jennings.

Some veterans are grumbling that Klecko was let go more as an economic consideration (his '88 salary is \$832,000) than because of questions about his surgically repaired knee.

Walton says that's nonsense.

"I looked at the films of our first two games [convincing victories over Buffalo and New England]," Walton said. "The people who played well are still here." No mistaking the implication there. The coach wanted to clean house, and he was given the go-ahead by owner Leon Hess.

Walton is trying to alter the hard-driving style that many observers blame for the Jets' winter flameouts the last two years (0-7 the last two Decembers). What this means is that the team's regular-season practices will be shortened, in an effort to spare the legs of his skill players.

Skill players, frankly, are not the Jets' biggest problem. Although running back Freeman McNeil has slowed some, Johnny Hector is an excellent back. The Jets wideouts are excellent. Al Toon led the AFC in receptions and a healthy Wesley Walker can still get deep. Ken O'Brien is a very good quarterback when he gets time to throw—but there's a rub. The Jets yielded 66 sacks.

To remedy the problem, they drafted USC tackle Dave Cadigan, a future Pro Bowl player whose selection will allow Jim Sweeney to move back to center where he belongs.

On defense, can the Slack Exchange turn back into the Sack Exchange? That's problematic. But it should be fun to watch Mark Gastineau, now that he's grown back his body hair and says he's recaptured his enthusiasm for the game because of his engagement to actress Brigitte Nielsen. Hey, whatever works. —L. D.

Projected Record: 4-12, 5th in AFC East.

AFC CENTRAL SUPERLATIVES

Offense

WR: Ernest Givins, Oilers
WR: Drew Hill, Oilers
TE: Ozzie Newsome, Browns
T: Anthony Munoz, Bengals
T: Cody Risien, Browns
G: Mike Munchak, Oilers
G: Terry Long, Steelers
C: Mike Webster, Steelers
QB: Bernie Kosar, Browns
HB: Mike Rozier, Oilers
FB: Earnest Byner, Browns

Defense

E: Eddie Edwards, Bengals
E: Keith Willis, Steelers
T: Tim Krumrie, Bengals
ILB: Mike Johnson, Browns
ILB: David Little, Steelers
OLB: Clay Matthews, Browns
OLB: Mike Merriweather, Steelers
CB: Hanford Dixon, Browns
CB: Frank Minnifield, Browns
FS: Jeff Donaldson, Oilers
SS: Keith Bostic, Oilers

Special Teams

PK: Gary Anderson, Steelers
P: Scott Fulhage, Bengals
KR: Curtis Duncan, Oilers
PR: Gerald McNeil, Browns
Best draft: Browns
Top rookie: Clifford Charlton, Browns
Most overrated: Walter Abercrombie, Steelers
Most underrated: Drew Hill, Oilers
Coach on the spot: Sam Wyche, Bengals

CLEVELAND BROWNS

FOR TWO STRAIGHT YEARS THE Browns have been a whisper away from realizing their Super Bowl dreams.

Two seasons ago they had John Elway and his legions stuck in the mud at their own 2-yard line before the Broncos engineered what will always be known as The Drive.

Last season the Browns mounted what was to become the greatest comeback in playoff history, only to see running back Earnest Byner fumble the ball as he approached the endzone for the game-tying score in the final moments.

They were shattering losses, ones that left the Browns muttering, "So close, so close."

The day after last year's AFC Championship Game loss, head coach Marty Schottenheimer gave his team a history lesson. He pointed out how the Dallas Cowboys repeatedly were repelled in championship games before finally winning the Super Bowl, how the Raiders had followed a similar path. The Browns, he said, needn't be discouraged.

So while his players rebuilt their egos, Schottenheimer and staff undertook to rebuild the aging, leaky Browns defense. It was, after all, the defense that killed the team's Super Bowl hopes both years. And their top players—Bob Golic, Clay Matthews, Carl Hairston, and Hanford Dixon—weren't getting any younger.

"We ran the risk of a large portion of our defense getting old at one time," Schottenheimer said. "When that happens, you create a lot of problems for yourself."

To further muddle the defensive picture, last year's first-round draft pick, Mike Junkin, had difficulty rehabilitating from a career-threatening wrist injury. Thus, the man tabbed to replace Pro Bowler Chip Banks could not be counted upon to be healthy, much less be prepared to handle his new position at outside linebacker.

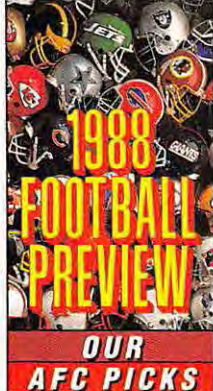
The Browns had some holes to plug. They needed linebackers. They needed pass-rushers. They needed secondary help. They needed folks who could stop Mr. Elway.

They hope that they found some on draft day. In the first and third rounds, they grabbed linebackers Clifford Charlton—whom they ranked behind only Auburn's Aundray Bruce—and Van Waiters of Indiana, a player they tabbed among their top 50 overall. In between, they took the Ice Chest, Michael Dean Perry, the not-so-little brother of the Bears' Fridge. He is expected to put some pressure on the quarterback from the defensive end position.

In just one afternoon the Browns defense was infused with youth and flexibility. Now Junkin can move back to his natural position, inside linebacker, and give veteran Eddie Johnson a training-camp tussle for the job. Charlton is expected to move outside, with Clay Matthews at the other

Everyone from ex-wives to refs is picking on poor Gastineau.





outside spot and Mike Johnson inside. Meanwhile, Waiters can prepare to become the heir apparent to Matthews.

This is a football team that is just a few big defensive plays away from the Big Show. With some new faces, the Dawgs may have their day yet.

—B. K.

Projected Record: 11-5, 1st in AFC Central.

HOUSTON OILERS

EARLY LAST SEASON IT APPEARED THE only place the Oilers were going was Jacksonville. Team owner Bud Adams threatened to move the club—public outcry was at a minimum—until he extracted promises to make life in the Astrodome more palatable and profitable.

And, surprisingly, the only new territory the Oilers moved into was the playoffs. Houston made it into the postseason with its 9-6 record for the first time since 1980. Not bad for a team that had won only 15 games total in the previous four seasons.

Now the Oilers have greater visions: beat Cleveland and win the division. "One of the basic problems around here the last seven or eight years

Moon's Oilers eye the Super Bowl as a realistic goal.

has been not having a winning attitude. We changed that by what we accomplished last year," said quarterback Warren Moon, who is coming off the first season in which he threw more touchdown passes than interceptions.

Some would say it's about time the Oilers joined the NFL's elite. They have always been a team that won in April and lost in September. But, after so many years, the high draft choices are paying off.

The Oilers won, amid criticism that they were a cheap-shot team. During Houston's chippy victory over Pittsburgh, Steelers coach Chuck Noll told some of the Oilers players that he was ready to fight Jerry Glanville at midfield. He also gave Glanville a long lecture after the game.

"Our defense's strength is that they swarm you and gang-tackle you," Glanville said.

"Ever since I've been here, he's coached defense that way," Moon said. "We just started winning with it last year, so it got noticed."

The Oilers played defense with a grudge. Charles Martin, Doug Smith, John Grimsley, Keith Bostic, and Jeff Donaldson are not averse to sending messages. The Oilers even try to intimidate kickers. Just ask Indianapolis' Dean Biasucci and New Orleans' Morten Andersen.

Perhaps the Oilers play that way because they've lacked a dominating defensive player. They hope they have found one in Sean Jones, a defensive end acquired from the Raiders for a No. 1 draft choice. Jones, just 25, led the AFC in sacks in 1986 but is coming off a substandard season. The Oilers had more than one sack in only seven of their 15 regular-season games last year.

"We worked on this trade a long time and researched it well," Oilers general manager Ladd Herzog said. "Sean Jones played with some aches and pains last year, but he's a great kid and he's healthy."

Teams rarely come out of nowhere to have playoff success. They must build to the moment. The Oilers took a big step last year getting into the divisional playoff round [they knocked off Seattle in the wild-card game]. This year they want more.

"We got a taste of the playoffs last year and saw what the intensity is like," Moon said. "We have that experience now and can look at the Super Bowl as being realistic."

—G. M.

Projected Record: 9-7, 2nd in AFC Central.

CINCINNATI BENGALS

WHEN IT COMES TO FINDING FILM footage of the strange, the perverse, and the bizarre in professional sports, folks in Cincinnati needn't span the globe. All they need to do is check out the three-ring circus that is the Cincinnati Bengals.

This team has a patent on wacky. They lose on blocked field goals, botched two-minute drills, coin tosses, you name it. And this is a team that is generally considered to possess the best talent in the AFC Central.

So what's going on here?

No one seems to know. When team owner Paul Brown called a press conference late last season to make an announcement about the future of his beleaguered head coach, Sam Wyche, it was assumed that Wyche's day of reckoning had come. Local journalists had all but written their "Dewey

Beats Truman" headlines, proclaiming the firing of Wyche.

So what does Brown do? He says Wyche would not only finish the season, but would also finish out the final year of his five-year pact this upcoming season. How in the name of the no-huddle offense had Wyche wangled another year? Did he have some embarrassing photographs of Brown or what?

Forget the Bengals' inability to win the big games. Last year the bottom fell out, and it fell out in a number of embarrassing ways. It began with Wyche's decision to go for it with seconds remaining on fourth down in his own territory with his team leading the San Francisco 49ers. As has been chronicled a number of times, the Bengals were stuffed, the 49ers took over, and Joe Montana found Jerry Rice in the endzone for the game-winning touchdown.

Perhaps the only stroke of good fortune to touch Wyche came with the strike, which deflected attention away from that blunder and onto the work stoppage. But instead of keeping his mouth shut and coaching his replacement team, Wyche became buddy-buddy with the picketeers, then turned and criticized them. Bad enough there was a credibility gap; now there was a personality schism.

And when the players returned to work, the goofiness continued. Every week the Bengals created new and strange ways to lose. After a loss to Pittsburgh, a Steelers assistant coach made an offhand remark in the stadium elevator that summed up the entire season: "Looks like Wicky Wacky [Wyche] screwed up another one."

Nonetheless, Brown has remained loyal to Wyche, firm in his belief that circumstance and injuries conspired to turn the Bengals into also-rans. He also hopes the players will band together and perform for Wyche in this, the last year of his contract.

—B. K.

Projected Record: 7-9, 3rd in AFC Central.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

REMEMBER THE OLD, COLORFUL Mean Joe Greene-Terry Bradshaw Steelers? Remember how dominant they were? How much fun they were to watch? How exciting they were to follow? Well, we're sad to report the updated 1988 version of this once-proud franchise not only isn't very good, it's—dare we say it?—downright dull.

They have no one to throw the ball, hardly anyone to catch it, and although they continue to run the ball with some efficiency, no running back on the roster even faintly resembles a great breakaway threat. How bad is it? Let's just say your average Chuck Noll interview is more entertaining than watching these guys play. And Chuck never will be confused with Jay Leno.

Hey, if nothing else, at least Pittsburgh might have a real old-fashioned quarterback controversy this fall. Now that Mark Malone has been shipped to San Diego amid a Steel City chorus of rousing cheers and grateful sighs, the quarterback job is wide open.

Young, erratic Bubby—as in flubby?—Brister and older, more conservative Todd Blackledge are the leading candidates. Brister is the better athlete, more flamboyant, the kid who likes to roll



1988 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

OUR AFC PICKS

the dice on the field, and roll with the action off it. Blackledge, acquired by trade from Kansas City, is the more natural leader, the former hometown hero from Penn State who remains your basic model citizen, if not your prototype pro passer.

Chances are, whoever wins this duel will be forced to stick with Noll's plodding ball-control tactics, utilizing a

solid offensive line and a stable of interchangeable backs such as Earnest Jackson, Frank Pollard, and—yawn—Walter Abercrombie.

The best thing that could happen to the Pittsburgh offense is for somebody to rediscover Louis Lipps. Football's most dangerous wide receiver just a couple of years ago, Lipps has spent the past two seasons in the trainer's room. Unable to shake injuries nearly as well as opposing cornerbacks, he was limited to a career-low 11 receptions in 1987, and he'll have to do far better than that this year. Especially since Hall of Fame candidate John Stallworth has retired.

Defensively, Mean Joe is still around. It's just that he's not as intimidating in his new role as assistant coach. So the Steelers have been frantically trying to find someone he can shape in his own image. The latest candidate is huge Aaron Jones, the No. 1 draft pick out of Eastern Kentucky.

The rest of the defense is young and aggressive and features a gaggle of outstanding linebackers and a deep, talented secondary highlighted by the eagerly awaited debut of gifted Rod Woodson as a starter. Woodson could turn out to be the most exciting of all the Steelers, which tells you everything you really need to know about them.

—S. B.

Projected Record: 6-10, 4th in AFC Central.

Elusive John Elway scrambled for 304 yards rushing in '87.



AFC WEST SUPERLATIVES

Offense

WR: Steve Largent, Seahawks
WR: Vance Johnson, Broncos
TE: Todd Christensen, Raiders
T: Jim Lachey, Chargers
T: John Alt, Chiefs
G: Keith Bishop, Broncos
G: Bryan Millard, Seahawks
C: Bill Bryan, Broncos
QB: John Elway, Broncos
HB: Curt Warner, Seahawks
FB: John L. Williams, Seahawks

Defense

E: Howie Long, Raiders
E: Jacob Green, Seahawks
T: Bill Maas, Chiefs
ILB: Fred Young, Seahawks
ILB: Karl Mecklenburg, Broncos
OLB: Billy Ray Smith, Chargers
OLB: Jim Ryan, Broncos
CB: Albert Lewis, Chiefs
CB: Mike Harden, Broncos
FS: Deron Cherry, Chiefs
SS: Vann McElroy, Raiders

Special Teams

PK: Norm Johnson, Seahawks
P: Ralf Mojsiejenko, Chargers
KR: Paul Palmer, Chiefs
PR: Lionel James, Chargers
Best draft: Raiders
Top rookie: Neil Smith, Chiefs
Most overrated: Rulon Jones, Broncos
Most underrated: Dino Hackett, Chiefs
Coach on the spot: Frank Gansz, Chiefs

DENVER BRONCOS

WHY DOES EVERYONE EXPECT THE Broncos to fall off their lofty perch in the AFC West? So what that they got hammered for the second straight time in the Super Bowl? Twenty-six other teams would have surrendered their first-round pick for the honor of getting hammered in the Super Bowl.

Is John Elway no longer Superman? Will Karl Mecklenburg be reduced to a 98-pound weakling? Will the Three Amigos have their videos pulled from the TV screen? Hardly.

The Broncos are fine, thank you. A little tinkering here, some changes there, some new ideas from the five new assistant coaches, and the Broncos should repeat as AFC West champs.

As long as Elway can scramble and throw strikes to his receivers, the Broncos will be near the top of the league. There's no need to panic; it's just a matter of filling in the gaps.

But, as the Washington Redskins illustrated, there are some gaps, especially on defense.

Start with the secondary, which surely took its lumps from Doug Williams & Co. Chances are that Mark ("I'm not talking") Haynes will not return, so there should be plenty of job openings. Mike Harden is entrenched at free safety and Dennis Smith, though he has struggled recently, is the strong safety.

But the cornerback positions are less stable. Steve Wilson is workable on the right corner, but he's no All-Pro. And if Haynes gets dumped, two rookies—third-rounder Kevin Gidry of LSU and fifth-rounder Corris Ervin of Central Florida—will be looked upon to man the left corner.

The defensive line should receive a boost from first-round draft pick Ted Gregory, a nose tackle from Syracuse. In coach Joe Collier's defensive scheme, an effective nose man is essential, and the Broncos feel they picked up the ultimate nose man in Gregory.

The Broncos, who have long possessed an undersized offensive line, figure to tip the scales with the addition of rookie Gerald Perry (6'6", 324 pounds) at left tackle and increased playing time for second-year center Keith Kartz (6'4", 270), a mere Lilliputian by comparison. The offensive line will grow by at least 20%, assuming Perry doesn't go on the Pritikin Diet.

The running game is much improved after the Broncos acquired Tony Dorsett from the Cowboys for a 1989 draft choice. Now out of the shadow of Herschel Walker, Dorsett has the opportunity to prove that he is still one of the NFL's premier runners. Gerald Willhite appears recovered from his broken leg, Steve Sewell has bulked up, and Sammy Winder is back.

But beyond the bodies and the numbers, the question remains: Can the Broncos continue to bang their heads against the wall without knocking themselves out altogether? The final hurdle still looms.

—B. K.

Projected Record: 10-6, 1st in AFC West.

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS

IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE THE Raiders have made the playoffs. That's roughly a lifetime in Al Davis years. But the drought won't last much longer.

The Raiders consoled themselves last season with the belief that they were the best 5-10 team in pro football. The Raiders also believe that the team as it is currently constituted can return some pride and poise to the organization's battered image.

And yes, that includes at the quarterback position where Marc Wilson, the darling of the Coliseum boo-birds, isn't around any more. Critics said Wilson was too slow, too immobile, too nice, too everything.

Well, Raider faithful, even with Wilson gone don't hold your breath waiting for a blockbuster quarterback change because it doesn't appear to be in the offing.

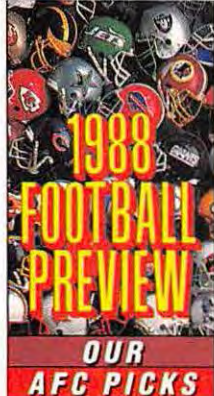
As it stands now, Vince Evans will replace Jim Plunkett as the team's third-string signalcaller. Steve Beuerlein might sneak into the picture as well. That leaves Rusty Hilger, who bombed out as the Raiders' opening day QB in '87, as the top gun.

Injuries decimated the offensive line last season, forcing former head coach Tom Flores to use eight different combinations in 12 games. New coach Mike Shanahan will be hoping for more stability and some protection for the quarterback, whomever he is.

The Raiders' backfield is as interesting as ever, with Marcus Allen coming off an average year (for him) and the renowned football hobbyist Bo Jackson. The draft of Notre Dame multipurpose man Tim Brown gives the Raiders another weapon, not to mention another Heisman for the trophy case.

Defensively, the Raiders do not resemble their snarling, intimidating predecessors. No Jack Tatum in this group. But they're not bad, particularly with Howie Long patrolling the defensive line.

The biggest question will be replacing pass-rush specialist Sean Jones, who was dealt to the Houston Oilers for several draft picks. The Raiders are looking for Greg Townsend to pick up the pace and are hoping for an injury-



free season for 1986 first-round pick Bob Buczkowski, who has played two games in two years. Scott Davis, drafted this season out of Illinois, will also get a look.

After three years without a playoff appearance, you can be sure that Davis will find some answers. —B. K.

Projected Record: 9-7, 2nd in AFC West.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

LOOK DEEPLY INTO THE FUTURE OF the Kingdome and you can see Kelly Stouffer throwing long, soaring bombs to darting little receivers such as Brian Blades and Tommy Kane.

But stare into the present and you can see the Seahawks still having to depend on good ol' hot-and-cold Dave Krieg at quarterback.

Krieg is like a TV sitcom. When he's good, he's very, very good. When he's bad, he's awful.

The best pattern runner of our time helps offset the inconsistency of Mr. Krieg, which makes things easier for a Seattle offense that otherwise revolves around tailback Curt Warner.

"Ground Chuck," as they refer to Chuck Knox's grinding offense in the Northwest, ranked 10th in the NFL in rushing but only 23rd in passing in 1987. The hope is that those figures will balance out some, with Blades and Kane adding speed to

the wide receiver corps and perhaps even Stouffer, the high-priced rookie acquired by trade from the Phoenix Cardinals, coming on in the second half of the season to provide some assistance out of the bullpen.

Seattle has a solid enough offensive line built around rising star Bryan Millard at guard. A tight end who could catch an occasional pass would be nice, but somehow, Knox never seems too interested in finding one.

All this offensive planning will be moot, of course, if the Seahawks don't muscle up on defense.

Brian Bosworth generated a lot of publicity last year, but he and his teammates allowed too many yards. Seattle finished 22nd overall in the league defensively and 26th against the rush.

That's almost enough to make The Boz's rain-bow-colored hair stand on end, if it isn't already.

Knox needs to find a nose tackle who can keep opposing blockers off Bosworth and Fredd Young, pro football's most underrated linebacker. A year ago, physical teams spent most of their time running right up the gut on Seattle.

So why did the Seahawks wait until the sixth round to pick a wide body capable of filling that hole? Maybe South Carolina's Roy Hart, their fourth pick in the draft, will be the answer.

The Boz, who showed marked improvement in the second half of his rookie season, and rapidly maturing Tony Woods team with Young to give them solid linebacking.

The same, unfortunately, can't be said for the secondary. Kenny Easley is gone (because of a career-ending kidney injury) at strong safety, and the cornerbacks—Terry Taylor and Patrick Hunt-

er—are almost as untried as they are unknown.

So it all comes back to the Seahawks generating enough firepower to outscore the other guys. And that's not likely to happen unless Mr. Krieg suddenly develops into Mr. Consistency. —S. B.

Projected Record: 9-7, 3rd in AFC West.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

TALK ABOUT PERSONALITY CHANGES.

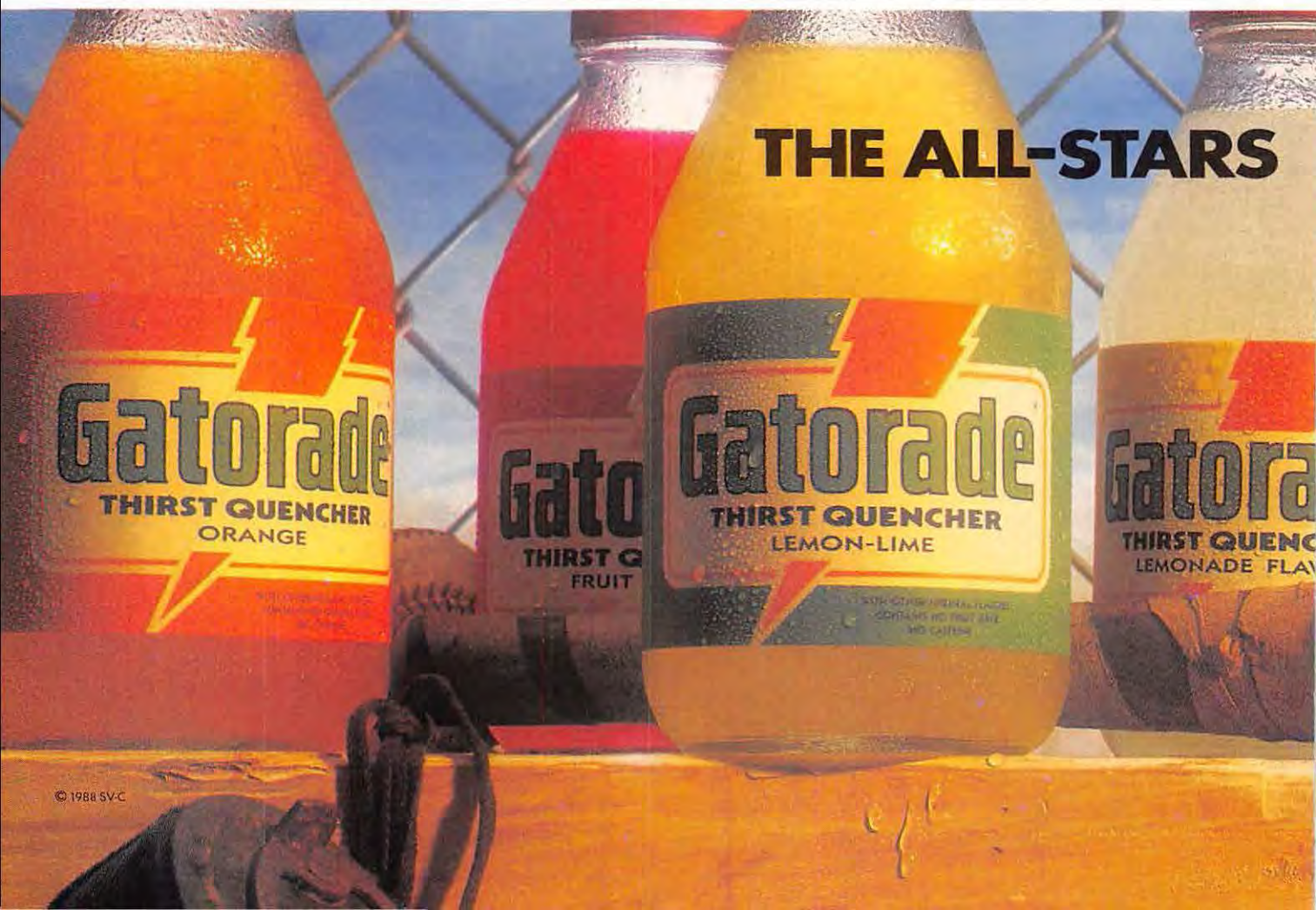
The Chargers have gone from a wild, glitzy, state-of-the-art passing machine to a dull, dreary, nobody's-sure-where-they're-going offense. They've gone from frenetic to plastic. From colorful to drab. From the Space Age to the Stone Age. Or, to put it more succinctly, from Dan Fouts to Mark Malone.

Fouts wanted to stick with the old Air Coryell passing shows, but head coach Al Saunders was more interested in developing a new power-running game. Now, with Fouts nudged into retirement, the coach gets a chance to implement his own offensive scheme, which sounds interesting enough, except for one thing.

What do you do for a running back, Al?

Everyone expected the Chargers to pick a hotshot runner in the draft, but when they looked up and found Lorenzo White, Craig Heyward, Thurman Thomas, and Brad Muster still on the board, they somehow managed to ignore all of them. Saunders audibilized, taking speedy wide receiver Anthony Miller (from Tennessee), then took another pass-catcher, Quinn Early (Iowa), with his second selection.

Does that mean journeyman Curtis Adams is



back for another plug-along year as the No. 1 tailback? San Diego fans hope not. Disappointing Gary Anderson has proved to be a better receiver than runner, and blocking fullback Tim Spencer is strictly a short-yardage type.

Somebody better materialize at the position soon, because the Chargers don't figure to win many games with their passing. Malone, who was traded back to his hometown from Pittsburgh, is a fine, strapping, physical specimen who looks a lot like actor Tom Selleck. Unfortunately, he also throws like Selleck.

The irony of all this is that San Diego, the NFL's premier good-hit, no-field team of the '80s, finally seems to have developed a decent defense. The Chargers were 15th overall and fourth against the pass, the best ranking the club has had since 1970.

This is a team that stunned the rest of the league by winning eight straight games early in 1987, only to stagger through the second half of the season losing its last six games. Now the Chargers are looking bravely toward the future, which isn't easy to do with the quarterback situation still—if you'll excuse the expression—up in the air.

At least the Chargers can't say they didn't have any options. They could have packaged a deal for Washington's Jay Schroeder. They could have returned San Francisco's phone calls when the 49ers were shopping Joe Montana.

Instead, they shipped an eighth-round draft choice to the Steelers for Malone and traded perennial back-up Mark Herrmann to Indianapolis for a late-round pick in next year's lottery.

Oh, well, if nothing else, that long, overworked

scoreboard operator at San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium should finally get a well-deserved rest.

—S. B.

Projected Record: 5-11, 4th in AFC West.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

THE KANSAS CITY PUNCHING BAGS, ER, Chiefs are back for another try, shifting some personnel here, changing some people there, hoping someday they might be able to deal out some of that brutal punishment, instead of always absorbing it.

Sorry, guys, but it won't be this year.

This team has almost as many holes as Arrowhead Stadium has empty seats. Whenever Frank Gansz, the ex-pilot who serves as head coach, gets one of K.C.'s engines going, another seems to blow out.

In 1987 it was the defense, slipping faster than one of Hank Stram's old hair pieces. The pass rush went flat, the linebacking disappeared, and even the once reliable secondary forgot how to intercept passes. All of this might not have been so terrible if K.C. had featured an explosive offense of its own.

It didn't. And nothing has changed drastically in 1988, although Gansz finally appears to have settled on up-and-down Bill Kenney as his quarterback. "Bill Kenney is our starter, period," Gansz says. Funny, but K.C. fans could swear they've heard that one before.

Anyway, the Chiefs do have some potential offensively. Christian Okoye, the 253-pound brute, is still as raw as he is talented, although he

did rush for 660 yards, more than any other rookie in the league last season. And just think, he really hasn't even started throwing his weight around yet.

The wide receiving is just about as good as it gets. And we're not just talking in Kansas City. Pro Bowler Carlos Carson and dangerous Stephone Paige combined for 1,751 yards, better than most of the more publicized pass receiving combinations in the league. Up front, they've spent considerable time and even more money attempting to develop a blue-chip offensive line, and although they have some decent physical talent, most of the players still haven't lived up to their salaries.

Defensively, the hope centers on No. 1 draft pick Neil Smith, the 260-pound pass-rusher from Nebraska. The Chiefs are hoping Smith can terrorize quarterbacks the way old, run-down Art Still once did. If it works out that way, Bill Maas will be very appreciative. One of the two or three finest nose men in football, Maas deserves a little help in the trenches.

The jarring defensive turnaround was probably most noticeable in the secondary, where the group that topped the league in interceptions with 118 from 1983 to '86 produced only 11 in the 1987 season. It couldn't have had anything to do with Kansas City's watered-down pass rush, could it?

If nothing else, the Chiefs' special teams under Gansz have been superb. But then, you have to understand there is a good reason they punt and kick off and even block placekicks so well.

They get a lot of practice.

—S. B.

Projected Record: 5-11, 5th in AFC West. ■

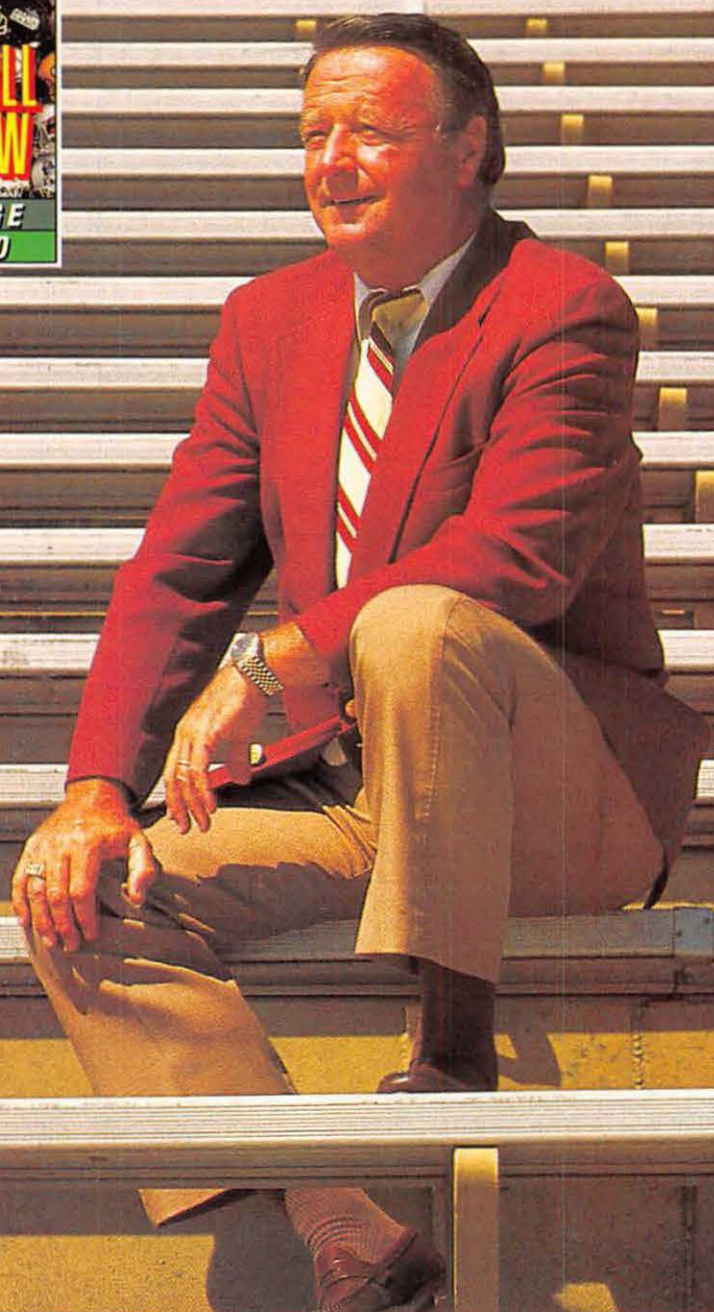
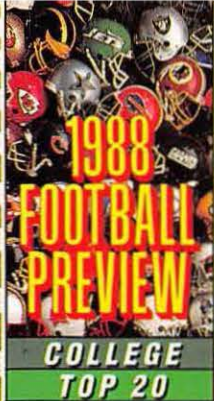


SALUTE THE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR.

NEW CITRUS COOLER

New Citrus Cooler just joined the Gatorade All-Star Team: speeding in fluids and minerals, energizing working muscles, and refreshing you with a cool citrus taste all its own.

GATORADE IS THIRST AID FOR THAT DEEP DOWN BODY THIRST.



*Inspirational
Bobby Bowden instills
faith, pride, and honor
in his top-ranked
Florida State team*

By HANK NUWER

FLORIDA STATE

1 BOBBY BOWDEN'S FOREHEAD creases like a collapsed accordion as he addresses the congregation of Tallahassee's Westminster Presbyterian Church. If need be, he looks prepared to wrassle this bunch for their souls, leaning his chunky body way over the pulpit lip as he preaches the do's and the don'ts.

Using his good-of-boy charm to advantage, Bowden has his audience smack-dab in the pockets of the stylish blue blazer he wears this fine Sunday morning. His voice drips a Georgia accent pure as sorghum while he advises all to live as if there's no tomorrow.

He has assured these good people that God will reserve them a seat on the 50-yard line of Heaven if only they'll have faith in the Lord and commit themselves completely. And, by gosh, he says as an afterthought that the same formula can also work miracles on the gridiron.

"Next year at Florida State University, if my players have complete faith in me and commit themselves to me, we can win a national championship. If they believe but don't commit, that's not enough—we can't do it then. You've got to believe in what I'm saying, and then you've got to commit yourself to me 100%."

A few minutes later the service ends and Bobby Bowden greets the flow of worshipers in the church's entrance hall. The handshakes are exuberant, the good will is everywhere, and the coach's Cheshire cat grin begins to run out of cheek room. Clearly, if Bobby Bowden ever wants to leave coaching, he has a sure-fire future ahead on the salvation circuit.

AT 58 YEARS OLD, ROBERT Cleckler Bowden has no intention of quitting the college football profession. "I'd like to coach as long as the good Lord allows," he says. "I'd like to get Florida State one national championship before I hang 'em up, and if I do, I'd like to get 'em two."

Clearly, he regards his lack of a national championship as a blot on his record. His overall coaching mark of 174-69-3 is topped only by the elder statesmen trio of Michi-

ST. BOBBY'S SEMINOLES SHOOT FOR NO. 1

gan's Bo Schembechler, Penn State's Joe Paterno, and Georgia's Vince Dooley. His 5-6 record in his first year at Florida State in 1976 is the only losing season he's had there. He's chalked up a 101-37-3 slate with the Seminoles, winding up in the Top 20 in eight of the past 12 years. His Florida State teams have gone to nine bowls in twelve years, including six wins and a tie in the last seven appearances.

In 1987 Bowden's Seminoles achieved a No. 2 ranking and fell just one completed pass short of playing for the national championship last New Year's Day. That pass occurred with 42 seconds left in the fourth quarter of an early season game against Miami. With the score Miami 26, Florida State 25, following a 73-yard drive engineered by quarterback Danny McManus, Bowden made a decision compatible with his gambling, freewheeling style. On a hunch, he yanked kicker Derek Schmidt (the NCAA all-time scoring whiz) off the field and sent McManus back into the game. Unfortunately, the quarterback's pass undershot tight end Pat Carter, costing the Seminoles

a chance at the national championship.

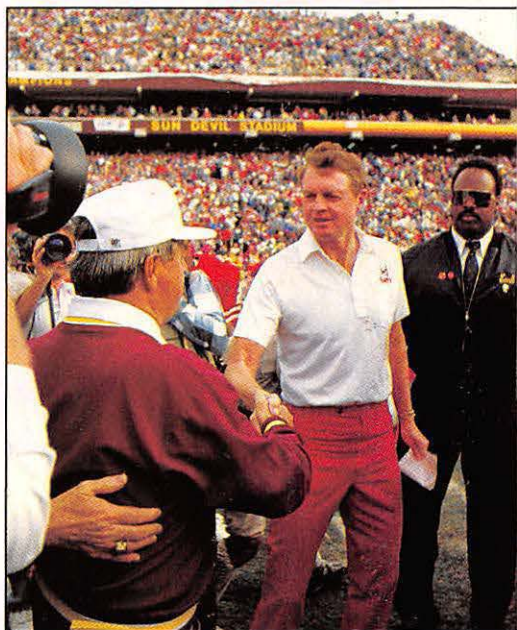
Significantly, that costly go-for-broke decision has done more to help the reputations of Florida State and Bobby Bowden than a sure-thing 26-26 tie would have done.

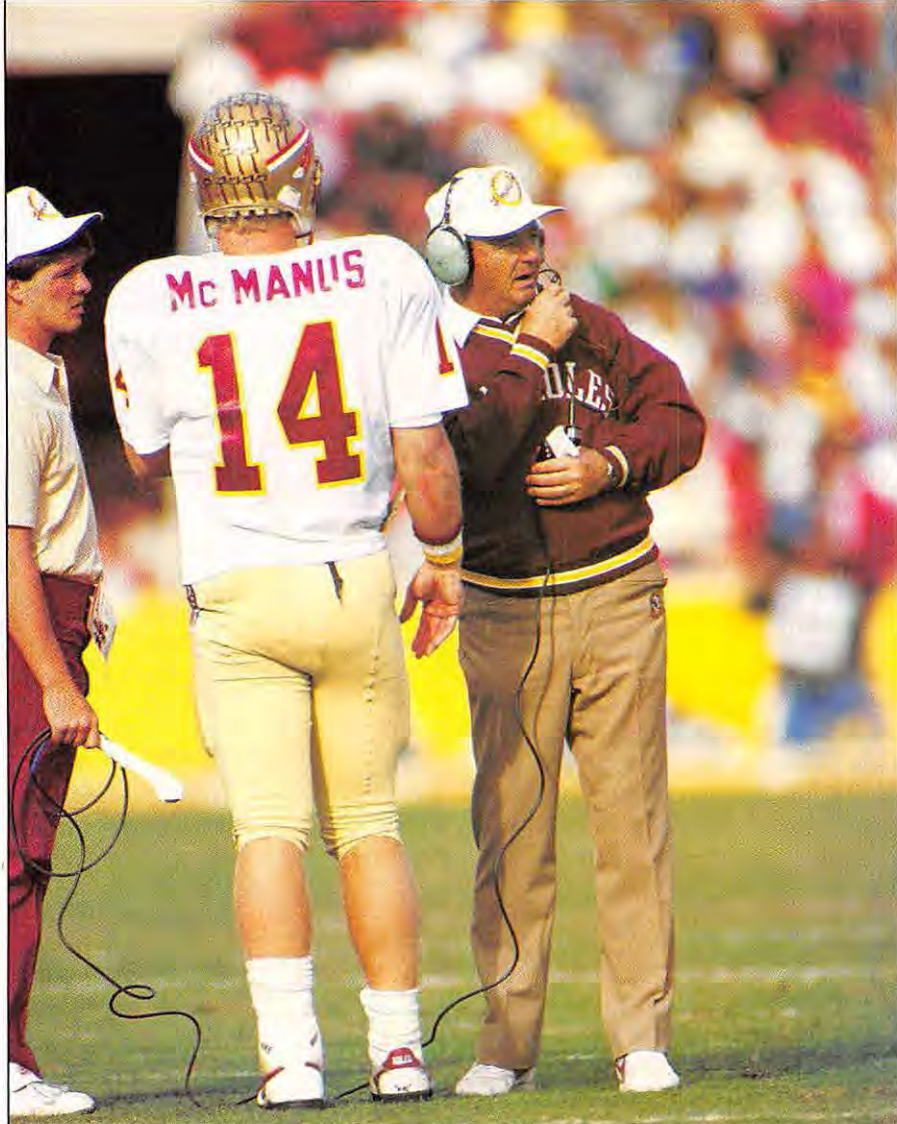
"That was the biggest game that had ever been played in Tallahassee," swears FSU sports information director Wayne Hogan. "The true college football image-makers came to Tallahassee for the first time. And when we went for two and didn't make it, everybody said, 'What a great move—the all-American decision.' Florida State gained an enormous amount of respect."

As a result of that CBS-televized game, Bobby Bowden moved to the brink of achieving household-name status. On one level is a small number of coaches such as Barry Switzer, Bo Schembechler, and Joe Paterno, who are more famous than the governors of their respective states. On

Bowden consoled losing coach Tom Osborne after Sammie Smith led FSU past Nebraska in the nail-biting '88 Fiesta Bowl.

another level is a much larger group of coaches who are celebrities at home, but known nationally only to football aficionados. Should the Seminoles win a national champi-





Bowden's play-calling kept graduated QB McManus on his toes.

onship this season, Bowden definitely will ascend to Level One, and he's talking as though he expects nothing short of perfection this year.

"This year we're going to have a football team at Florida State that's basically the same football team [as the 1987 squad]. Like I tell my boys, 'We'll be a contender.' If we don't win it, the worst we'll be is a pretty darn good football team."

DON (ROOSTER) FAULS, FSU'S team trainer from 1954 to 1986, likes to tell people that "Bobby Bowden is Florida State," and that expression seems to have become akin to a slogan in and around Tallahassee. Bowden has managed to avoid a nickname as memorable as the one Alabama's "Bear" Bryant enjoyed, but because of his team prayers and his preaching in Tallahassee churches, some FSU fans have begun calling him "Saint Bobby."

Seldom has a coach fit a university the way Bowden fit into FSU. Although Tallahassee is the capital of Florida and is home to many politicians, this city of 82,000 is situated in

the far north of the state, a scant 25 minutes from the redneckiest counties in Georgia. Consequently, it takes a man who is a bit of a chameleon like Bowden—comfortable with both politicians and peasants—to find acceptance by fans at both extremes. And needless to say, this chameleon-like personality is an advantage to a coach who feels equally at home while recruiting in both rural and urban Florida.

"Coach Bowden can sit out here in Tallahassee and put a chew of tobacco in his mouth, put a stick in his hand and whittle, and talk with the people of Tallahassee because he talks their language," says longtime FSU assistant head coach Chuck Amato. "But if you bring him to Miami and dress him up, you'd think he just came down from Wall Street."

Bowden grew up a staunch Baptist on the outskirts of Birmingham, Ala. Except for overcoming a life-threatening bout with rheumatic fever at age 13, young Bobby wasn't much different from other sports-crazy youngsters in his neighborhood. The greatest dream of the young quarterback and co-captain of Woodlawn High School was

to play ball for the University of Alabama.

Bowden achieved his dream in 1949, but in the spring his 16-year-old girlfriend, Ann Estock, began dating one of his friends while he was away. To combat that situation, 19-year-old Bobby secretly drove her across the state line to Rising Fawn, Ga., and tied the knot with his beautiful high school cheerleader. The couple's marriage has lasted 38 years. "We can't tell Bobby's players not to marry young," says Ann Bowden coyly.

Forced to live on a shoestring budget, Bowden transferred to Howard University and gained local, instead of possibly national, fame as a Little All-America quarterback. After graduation he paid his dues as a coach, working as a head coach at Samford (from 1959 to '62), an assistant at Florida State (1963 and '64) and West Virginia (1965 to '69), and finally, as head coach at West Virginia.

Bowden's tenure with the Mountaineers was bittersweet. He enjoyed a passable 42-26 record, but was once hung in effigy by WVU fans who also, on occasion, verbally assaulted him and his family.

Bobby Bowden says that while he now is mentally encased in scar tissue and can no longer be hurt by fans clamoring for his scalp, he was too tender-skinned when he was with the Mountaineers. "I've learned to live with the fickleness of fans, but it nearly got us," admits Bowden. "I nearly cracked at West Virginia. Finally, I said to myself, 'Bobby, if you don't like it get out of the profession, because that's the nature of the job.'"

Thus, when an opening occurred at Florida State to replace Darrell Mudra (4-18-0) as head coach, Bowden leaped at the opportunity to return to the deep South where he and his family felt most at home. "One thing I've found with the coaching profession is that when schools hire coaches, they hire coaches who fit the area," says Ann. "Tallahassee is a neat little place that its appearance belies. That ties in with Bobby. I think Bobby Bowden's appearance belies the [country boy] image that people create in their minds."

On the one hand, says Chuck Amato, "he's the Boss and make no mistake about it." Bowden can drive his players during the midafternoon heat of an August practice with the best of them, and his work ethic is unimpeachable. He's been known to recruit in Miami from daylight to midnight, grab a plane back to Tallahassee for five hours of sleep, and then fly back south to finish the job.

On the other hand, Bowden admits to having a soft streak in his nature, calling himself an easy mark around chocolate and fine food of any nationality. Except for an interest in

continued on page 57.

continued from page 52.

World War II history, he has no serious hobby. All things considered, he'd rather be golfing or lazing on the Panama City beach—"the Redneck Riviera" Ann calls it—outside his condominium. While Auburn's Pat Dye looks every inch a football coach, Bobby Bowden looks more like a preacher on his Monday off.

"Coach Bowden is low-key intense," says Amato, struggling to put a description of his boss into words. "But when he raises his voice he is *very* upset. But he gets the job done. Here it's more than X's and O's. It's how you motivate the kids, how you keep morale up, and how you gain a winning attitude. He installed a championship attitude from day one."

INDEED, BY HIS SECOND SEASON, in 1977, Florida State had upped its record to 10-2. In 1979 FSU went unbeaten during the regular season, losing only in the Orange Bowl to Oklahoma. In 1980 the Seminoles were 10-2, and last year, except for the one-point loss to Miami, Bowden's charges swept the rest of the schedule, including a Fiesta Bowl win over Nebraska. Bowden's fellow coaches call him "King of the Road," noting his 1987 victories away from Tallahassee against powerhouses Auburn, Michigan State, Florida, and Nebraska.

What's more, Bowden's team's excited everyone with their daredevil style of play. Two years ago, he stunned Miami on a kickoff return by ordering a cross-field lateral that resulted in a 90-yard touchdown.

Win or lose, Bowden's postgame press conferences rival those of Notre Dame's Lou Holtz for humor.

"OK, who wants to throw the first barb?" he asked a Florida State booster group after a 1986 loss to Michigan. "We outslopped the world," he groaned after a 45-30 win over South Carolina in 1983. "We were just one play late with that one, weren't we?" he remarked to an assistant after he'd substituted for a fullback who'd made a critical fumble.

In addition, perhaps remembering how he himself had quit the Alabama team as a youngster, Bowden frequently operates on a gut level, giving second and third chances to players who have been in trouble. He's weathered criticism in Tallahassee for hiring former FSU-Oakland Raiders standout Willie Jones as a student coach after Jones convinced him the cocaine problems that had wrecked his NFL career were behind him.

"If they make a mistake, I'm going to punish them, but I'm going to give them another chance," says Bowden, "but only after I consider the effect it has on the other 95 players on scholarship."

Running back Dexter Carter says that Bowden is anything but a pushover. "Many times I've tried to change his mind," he says, "but when it's set on something you can't change it. Still, I've no complaints."

BOWDEN'S 1988 TEAM MAY JUST be his strongest ever. Florida State has five fine running backs, including Heisman hopeful Sammie Smith and speedster Dexter Carter. But Bowden does not adhere to a cloud-of-dust running attack, and he may experiment with all his backfield talent, trying more razzle-dazzle plays than ever. "He won't call a reverse unless he knows it's going to work," says McManus, who graduated last year.

While some FSU boosters are skeptical that Smith can win the Heisman because Bowden plans to platoon him with Carter, Smith himself says he likes the situation. "I think it helps me even if it hurts my number of carries," says the 6'2", 221-pound junior. "We'll always have someone fresh to do the job when I get tired."

Adds Bowden, "He's going to have to average about eight yards per carry to win the Heisman Trophy. I won't do anything that's going to be detrimental to our winning so that somebody can win the Heisman, but if I have a game under control and we have it won, I might try to build up his statistics."

Bowden says that he realizes that the Heisman is a valuable recruiting tool and that Florida State had repeatedly been overlooked in balloting for national awards until Paul McGowan won the Butkus Award last year as the nation's best linebacker. It's only been since Florida suffered NCAA recruiting sanctions for violations under former coach Charlie Pell that Florida State has begun to best its downstate rival in the recruiting game.

Bowden took exceptional pleasure in last season's 28-14 win over the Gators, breaking a six-game losing streak against hated Florida that had Florida writers snarling. "All of a sudden they're publishing 'Can't Win the Big One,'" says Bowden. "I told them [after winning the last Fiesta Bowl], 'y'all are saying we can't win the big ones, so I'll have to convince Nebraska they're big.'"

Florida State, which under Bowden has played schedules that were either very soft or very difficult, has a 1988 schedule that is worthy of a national champion should the Seminoles win all of their games. The season begins with a rematch against Miami on national television in the Orange Bowl, and it also includes an away game in Death Valley against Clemson and a home game with Michigan State.

"If we're going to beat Miami at the end of the year, we're going to beat them at the beginning," vows Chip Ferguson, a senior

who lost the starting quarterback role to McManus a year ago, but looks likely to start against the 'Canes. "If we're going to win the national championship we have to win that first game. That's the team that took it away from us last year."

Defensive back Deion Sanders promises that last year's defensive collapse against Miami won't be repeated. "I want that championship ring on my finger," says Sanders, a 10.2 sprinter in 100-meter events during the track season. "I like having Miami in the first game—I wish we had Miami every game."

Bobby Bowden himself insists that he's going to enjoy the season. "Every year I'm just as enthusiastic as the first year I started," he claims. "I wonder if I was this excited when I started 35 years ago, but it seems like I was."

Whether the Florida State Seminoles can win a national championship in '88 remains to be seen. But with God and Saint Bobby both on the team's side, how can it fail? ■

Contributing writer HANK NUWER is an authority on coaching, as his latest book, 'Strategies of the Greatest Football Coaches,' will attest.

Florida State Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B	Defensive Line: A-
Running Backs: A	Linebackers: B
Receivers: A-	Secondary: B+
Offensive Line: A-	Special Teams: B-

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: at Miami, at Clemson

Recruiting Hotbeds

Florida (71 players), Georgia (12), Alabama (5)

You Read It Here First

Sammie Smith will rush for more yards than any other back named Smith in the state of Florida.

If We Were Bobby Bowden

We'd give Chip Ferguson every opportunity to hold on to the QB spot. The team can use his experience.

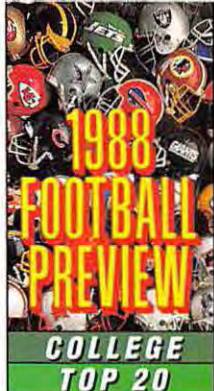
Stat Fact

Six of Smith's seven rushing TDs were on runs of 20 yards or more.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2A GRUELING SCHEDULE MAY PRE-vent Southern California from having the best record among West Coast powerhouses this fall, but don't go out and bet on it. The Trojans enter the season with the most experienced and skilled talent in the Pac-10, giving them the early edge over perennial toughies UCLA and Washington.

In coach Larry Smith's first season at USC the Trojans shocked crosstown rival UCLA, 17-13, for the conference championship and the Rose Bowl berth. A 20-17 loss to Michigan State capped an 8-4 season, and the Trojans will be improved in 1988.



The Trojans' only threat to overwhelming success is a monster schedule that includes Boston College, Oklahoma, and Notre Dame among nonconference foes.

The Pac-10 championship, unless the rebuilding Huskies prove otherwise, likely will come down to the November 19 clash with archrival UCLA. As was the case in 1967, when Heisman Trophy hopefuls Gary Beban and O. J. Simpson clashed in a memorable 21-20 USC victory, it could be a showdown of similar scope when USC quarterback Rodney Peete and Bruins QB Troy Aikman collide.

Peete is a 6'2", 195-pound senior who is among 15 starters returning from last year's Cinderella season. The Trojans also have their top punter and placekicker back, so 34 of the top 44 players from 1987 will attempt to take the school one step further.

"We achieved quite a bit last year," Smith conceded, "but it was unfulfilled achievement because we didn't win the Rose Bowl and we weren't ranked in the Top 10 nationally. Winning the conference title, winning the Rose Bowl, and working toward a national championship are our goals again."

Whether the Trojans approach those goals hinge on Peete, who is this season's collegiate version of Bo Jackson. Peete, who will shatter all major USC passing records before he's finished, is also a hard-hitting infielder on the Southern Cal baseball team, and like John Elway, he likely will have to make a decision if he's drafted

high by both professional baseball and the NFL next year.

"I'm glad I don't have to make a decision this year," said Peete. "I know this—I won't be another Bo Jackson. I don't think I could do both. There is too much outside study and mental work at quarterback on the pro level."

USC Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A	Defensive Line: A-
Running Backs: B	Linebackers: B-
Receivers: A-	Secondary: A-
Offensive Line: B	Special Teams: B+

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: Oklahoma, at UCLA

Recruiting Hotbeds

California (96 players), Arizona (4),
Washington D.C. (3)

You Read It Here First

Pac-10 schools will vote to throw USC out of the conference if the Trojans lose the '89 Rose Bowl.

If We Were Larry Smith

We'd wonder why the Trojans can't play some easier nonconference games. USC was 1-3 outside the Pac-10 last year, including the Rose Bowl loss to Michigan State.

Stat Fact

This season marks the 100th anniversary of USC football. Since 1888 the Trojans have won eight national titles, appeared in a league-record 25 Rose Bowls, and produced 105 first team All-Americans and four Heisman Trophy winners.

The Trojans think enough of Peete to list him as a leading Heisman candidate. After all, he set school single-season records with 197 comple-

tions, 2,709 yards, and 21 touchdown passes in 1987 for a football program better known for its Student Body Right formation that springs tailbacks into national prominence.

In fact, Peete didn't even make first team all-conference last year while two other USC juniors—tight end Paul Green and tailback Steven Webster—did. The 5'10", 185-pound Webster rushed for 1,109 yards, a 4.6 average, and six TDs last season before suffering torn knee ligaments in the UCLA game. He missed the Rose Bowl and spring practice.

Since the Trojans don't have their accustomed tailback depth—unless Aaron Emanuel resurfaces and isn't switched to fullback—there is more concern about the position than is usual at USC. The ground game is augmented by sophomore tailback Scott Lockwood and junior fullback Leroy Holt.

Then again, the Trojans could thrive without a dominant rushing attack because of their potent air game. Peete's top targets include Green, who grabbed 31 passes for 317 yards last year. The speed threat is junior flanker John Jackson (37 receptions for a 15.6-yard average, and seven TDs); the best pattern receiver is senior split end Erik Affholter (44, 14.8, and four TDs), who caught the game-winner against UCLA.

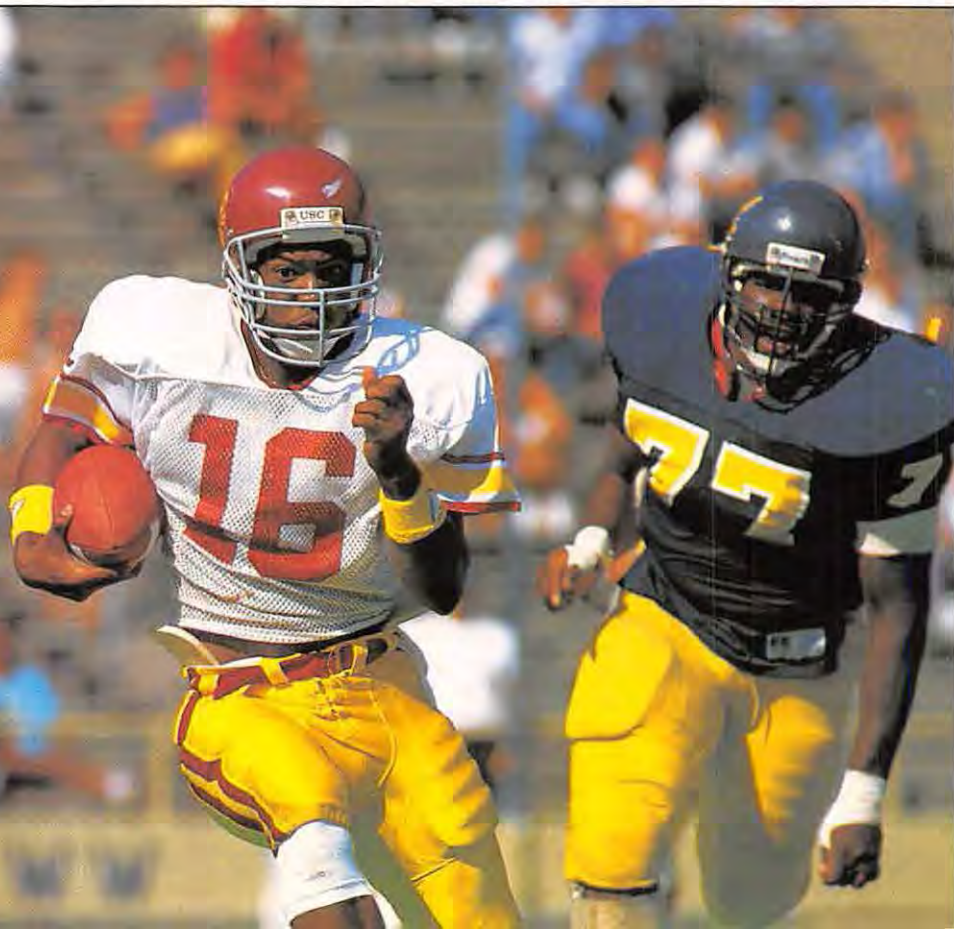
The offensive line is solid, as usual, with three returning starters in guards Mark Tucker and Brent Parkinson, plus 310-pound tackle John Guerrero. The placekicking is sound with sophomore Quin Rodriguez, who missed only four of 17 field-goal attempts.

As good as the Trojan offense is, the defensive unit is of equal caliber with seven starters returning. They include second team all-conference picks Tim Ryan on the line and Cleveland Colter at safety. The biggest hole is at linebacker, where three 1987 starters have departed. Guard Dan Owens and safety Mark Carrier also bear watching.

The 1988 Trojans are a balanced lot, a gifted group that either will be held back by a rugged schedule or capitalize on it for a lofty national ranking.

—NICK PETERS

A Heisman Trophy, and a baseball career, may be in Peete's future.



OKLAHOMA

3 THE MONSTER, BARRY SWITZER calls it. Given life by legendary Oklahoma coach Bud Wilkinson, the three national titles in the 1950s, and the immortal 47-game winning streak, The Monster is the reason Switzer feels compelled to have the Sooners in the fight for No. 1. Otherwise, OU fans deem the season a failure. Only losses to Miami each season have kept the Sooners from devouring three national titles and being called one of the great college teams ever.

Much of the task of satisfying The Monster's stomach, as well as the frenetic Switzer, will fall before Merv Johnson. The assistant head coach and offensive line chief is familiar with his task. They prefer to call it reloading rather than rebuilding at Norman. Sure, quarterback Jamelle Holieway returns for his senior season after missing the end of last year with an injured knee, and the usual herd of talented runners will suit up. But OU must replace 60% of what may have been one of the greatest offensive lines ever in college

football. The only returning starters are two-time All-America senior guard Anthony Phillips and senior center Bob Latham.

Oklahoma Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A-	Defensive Line: B+
Running Backs: A-	Linebackers: B
Receivers: B-	Secondary: B
Offensive Line: B	Special Teams: B+

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0

Tossups: Nebraska, at USC

Recruiting Hotbeds

Texas (47 players), Oklahoma (41), California (7)

You Read It Here First

After burning up opposing offenses, nose guard Dante Williams will become known as "the Inferno."

If We Were Barry Switzer

We'd consider moving one of the fullbacks to halfback. Both Leon Perry and Rotnei Anderson have shown that they can play.

Stat Fact

Jamelle Holieway has played in only one losing game as Oklahoma's starting QB.



OU's Thompson and Stafford will help The Monster reload in '88.

"From the standpoint of wholesale changes, it probably catches us like [after] the '81 season," said Johnson. "We had a lot of players who had started as sophomores in 1979, and they all left us at once. I hope we survive better than we did that time." The '82 season was one of upheaval at OU. The Sooners finished 8-4, despite a seven-game winning streak and the arrival of heralded freshman Marcus Dupree.

"There were a couple of years there where we weren't any good at all in the offensive line," Johnson said. Remember, The Monster. After all, OU finished 8-4 again in '83. Between 1971 and 1981, Oklahoma never went more than a year without having at least one All-America offensive lineman. And this is what Johnson likens to the current situation.

The reloading comes with having a great tradition for offensive linemen. Linemen know that if they come to OU, they are going to have the chance to block for one of the most efficient offenses in the country, even if they are unable to jump in as freshmen or sophomores. "I hope our young people recognize it takes a couple of years to assert yourself," Johnson said.

Spring practice didn't give Johnson much reason for optimism. Phillips and senior tackle Gary Bennett both suffered knee injuries that required surgery. The brightest development was junior tackle Mark VanKeirslick, who spent last season as Latham's understudy at center.

If Phillips and Bennett respond to surgery, Johnson likely will be able to reload the line. That will be welcome news to quarterbacks Holieway and Charles Thompson, plus backs Anthony Stafford, Damon Stell, Rotnei Anderson, Leon Perry (redshirted last season), and Eric Mitchell. And The Monster will be fed.

—JEFF MILLER

CLEMSON

4 AS HEAD COACH DANNY FORD BARNstormed across the state of South Carolina during the spring, eating at barbecues and

talking football with thousands of Tiger die-hards, one question continued to pop up: Was the offense the Tigers shocked Penn State with in the Citrus Bowl a preview of things to come this fall?

Clemson Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B	Defensive Line: B-
Running Backs: A-	Linebackers: B
Receivers: A-	Secondary: B
Offensive Line: B+	Special Teams: B+

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0

Tossups: Florida State, South Carolina

Recruiting Hotbeds

South Carolina (37 players), Georgia (30), North Carolina (20)

You Read It Here First

Gary Cooper and Ricardo Hooper's receiving skills will make QB Rodney Williams look super-duper.

If We Were Danny Ford

We'd hope '88 success will attract blue-chip recruits. The Tigers will need them after next season when they'll lose 18 four-year lettermen.

Stat Fact

After beating out a returning starter who was a preseason All-ACC, OG Eric Harmon became only the second freshman during Ford's tenure to start every game.

Against Joe Paterno's Nittany Lions, the Tigers abandoned their conservatism and put the ball in the air, walking off with a 35-10 victory, capping a 10-2 season that had been tinged with frustration.

Will the Clemson of New Year's Day be the Clemson of all of 1988?

Ford doesn't make any promises. The Bear Bryant disciple believes that good things come to those who go up the middle, and one shining exception isn't likely to change a lifetime philosophy.

The Tigers may go anywhere they want this year. They were on the edge of greatness last

year, and 18 starters are back. A national championship isn't out of the question regardless of how they choose to attack teams offensively.

The key is quarterback Rodney Williams, who made a habit of getting booed at home last season. The senior isn't particularly gifted at anything but winning. He needs just one more victory to become the school's all-time winningest quarterback.

He's an intelligent option quarterback who makes sharp reads. As a passer, though, he's suspect. At least he was until the Citrus Bowl, when he was brilliant and walked away with MVP honors in his second straight bowl game (he was MVP of the 1986 Gator Bowl).

Clemson's running game is almost too good. Last year they had no experience at tailback; this year they're trying to make sure three guys—ACC Rookie of the Year Terry Allen, Wesley McFadden, and Joe Henderson—each get enough playing time. Allen and McFadden combined to rush for 1,745 yards last year, but the shifty Henderson may emerge as the star this year. Senior fullback Tracy Johnson rushed for 557 yards and is a devastating blocker.

Defensively, the loss of ACC Player of the Year Michael Dean Perry on the line should be offset by the experience gained through the constant rotation of linemen last fall. Cornerback Donnell Woolford returns and should entrench himself as the best defensive back in Clemson history.

There's plenty of excitement building around Death Valley. The memory of the 1981 national championship still burns brightly, and this could be the year the Tigers make a run at their second championship.

—RON GREEN JR.

NOTRE DAME

5 THE FIGHTING IRISH PROMISED much but delivered little last season. They teased their fans, awakening the memories

1988 FOOTBALL PREVIEW COLLEGE TOP 20

of past glories while vaulting high in the national rankings with eight victories in their first nine games. But with hopes stirring, they then fell from grace with a resounding thud.

Three straight season-ending losses put a damper on a year that had raised expectations to an unrealistic level.

"We weren't ready to live up to what people wanted us

to be," said Lou Holtz, a football coach noted for his quick wit. "A little success got everybody dreaming big dreams."

That's the way life is under the Golden Dome. Always has been, always will. Holtz accepts the ground rules.

"I don't joke around as much as I used to," he said. "Notre Dame takes its football very seriously."

The Irish had the look of a serious contender for the 1987 national championship until the collapse, which ironically may have been triggered by the biggest win of the season, a 37-6 thumping of Alabama.

"We got beat up with our schedule and reached an emotional peak against Alabama," said Holtz. "That just happened. We tried to prevent it because you reach a depth after any peak."

Notre Dame Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B -	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: B +	Linebackers: A
Receivers: B	Secondary: A -
Offensive Line: B -	Special Teams: B -

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 6 • Probable Losses:
at USC

Tossups: Michigan, at Michigan State, Miami, Penn State

Recruiting Hotbeds

Illinois (20 players), Florida (12), Ohio (10), Pennsylvania (10)

You Read It Here First

Lou Holtz will install a double tight end offense to take advantage of top freshman Derek Brown and Frank Jacobs, a blue-chip recruit last season.

If We Were Lou Holtz

We'd develop the passing attack because the ground game and stiff defense won't be enough to win games against the caliber of opposition on Notre Dame's schedule.

Stat Fact

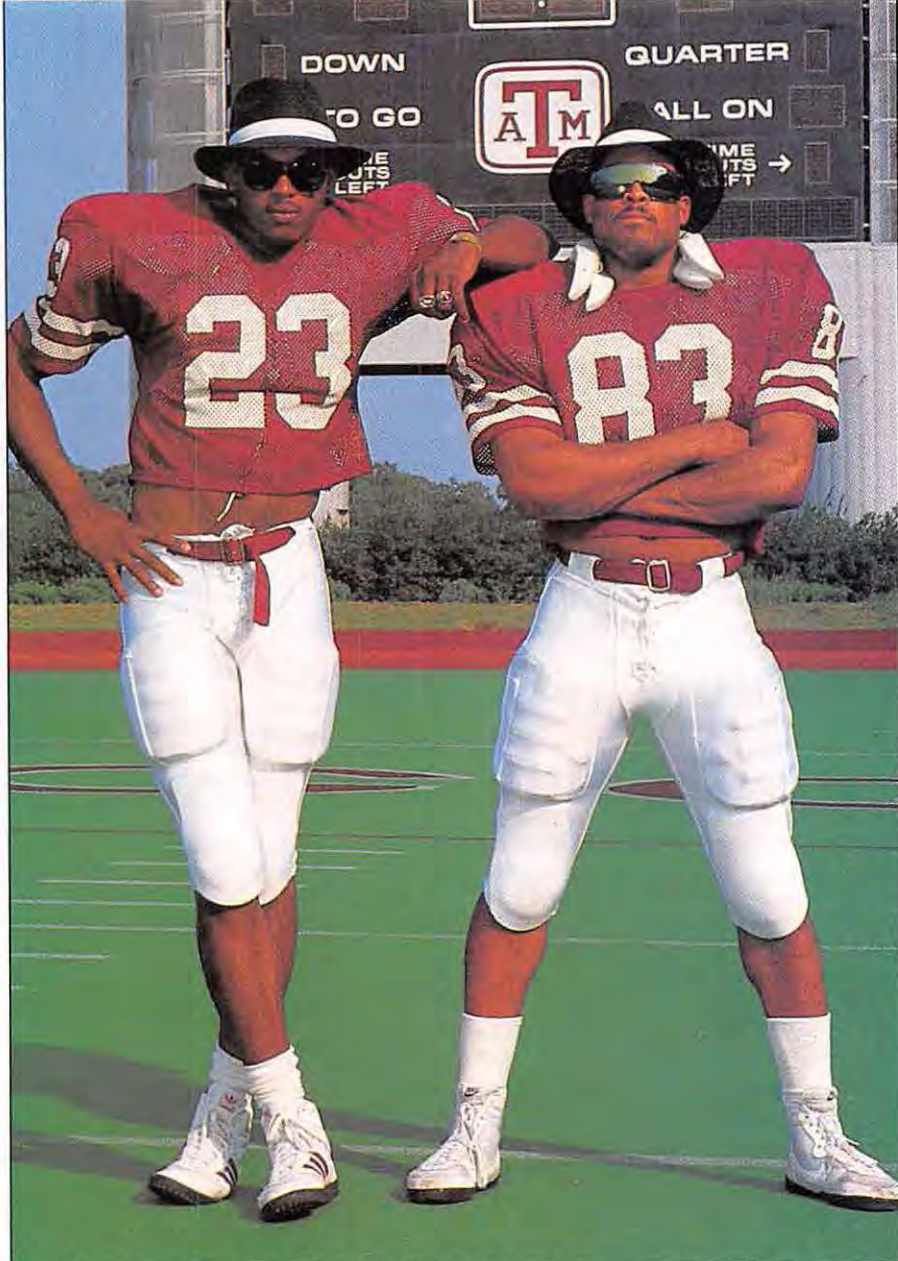
Notre Dame plays seven home games in '88 for the first time in the school's 101-year football history.

Notre Dame followed the victory over Alabama with a 21-20 loss to Penn State, a 24-0 loss to national champion Miami, and a 35-10 loss to Texas A&M in the Cotton Bowl.

The '88 schedule isn't easier.

Not even playing seven games at home for the first time in a season can soften a back-breaking 1988 schedule that includes games against seven teams that appeared in bowl games in 1987, including the national champion.

"You finish the year with three losses, and there are bound to be a lot of questions," said Holtz.



Wallace and Roper, A&M's 'Blitz Brothers,' are on a mission.

"But I think we've got a lot of answers, too."

The biggest question around campus is: Who will replace Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown?

The answer: Ricky Watters, the team's second-leading rusher with 373 yards a year ago. Mark Green, the top Irish rusher in each of the past two seasons, worked at flanker early in the spring before moving back to tailback.

"Mark Green is a fine tailback," said Holtz. "So is Ricky Watters. I'm sure Green and Watters will both play prominent roles on our football team."

The offense, though, isn't Holtz's top priority.

"I've said it since the day I came to Notre Dame," he said. "Until we become one of the top 10 defensive teams in the nation, we're just whistling in the dark. On defense is where it all happens."

The Irish need help rushing the passer. Linebacker Darrell (Flash) Gordon had 3½ quarterback sacks and is the only returnee with more than one. Notre Dame's defensive strength is at linebacker, where Ned Bolcar and Wes Pritchett were the top two tacklers last season with 106 and 70 tackles, respectively.

A year ago Notre Dame's defense ranked 17th nationally, permitting 301.3 yards per game.

With 11 starters back and a bonanza recruiting class, Notre Dame again has its fans excited. There's even talk about being No. 1 and winning the national championship.

"I'm not predicting what's going to happen," said Holtz, "but I think we're capable of fielding a decent football team."

Decent, however, isn't good enough at Notre Dame.

—PHIL AXELROD

TEXAS A&M

6 TEXAS A&M COACH JACKIE SHERRILL, like many Aggies who remained over in Dallas following the 35-10 Cotton Bowl drubbing of Notre Dame, stayed up to greet the sun on January 2, 1988. But while the others were reveling, reflecting on a resounding victory after winning a third consecutive SWC championship, Sherrill was busy charting a course toward SWC title No. 4 . . . any maybe more. Instead of bringing a hangover down to the breakfast table

that morning, Sherrill carted 20 pages of notes.

"A year ago, I thought we'd have a good football team in '87 and that we'd be better in '88 and '89," Sherrill said. The talent stockpiled at A&M now gives Sherrill what he's aimed for since he arrived at College Station in 1982—a realistic run at a national championship.

The nonconference schedule, though, may prevent that from happening in 1988. A&M plays Nebraska in the Kickoff Classic, LSU, and Oklahoma State on the road, and has a home date with Sherrill's alma mater, Alabama.

Texas A&M Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B —	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: B	Linebackers: A
Receivers: B	Secondary: B
Offensive Line: B —	Special Teams: A —

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: Nebraska (at East Rutherford, N.J.), at LSU, at Arkansas, at Texas

Recruiting Hotbeds

Texas (68 players), California (11), Louisiana (6)

You Read It Here First

A&M will defeat Texas on Thanksgiving for a fourth straight SWC title and a fourth straight Cotton Bowl bid.

If We Were Jackie Sherrill

We'd start Cotton Bowl MVP Bucky Richardson at quarterback because he has proven big-game experience.

Stat Fact

All-American John Roper, the SWC Defensive Player of the Year, had 104 tackles, including 15 sacks.

"You have to play those people and compete with those people," Sherrill said. "Winning the national championship is certainly our goal, but that's not our obsession. But for us to do that, we have to put ourselves in position to become one of the 10 or 15 teams that has a chance."

Texas A&M's chances at contending for a national title this season will rest with the defense again. A solid core returns despite the loss of middle guard Sammy O'Brien and safeties Kip Corrington and Chet Brooks. The Aggies boast a fearsome linebacking corps, led by Butkus Award candidate John Roper (one A&M official last season suggested that Roper has been let out of a cage). Roper and fellow "Blitz Brother" Aaron Wallace, the Aggies' other outside linebacker, combined for 27 sacks, 20 tackles for losses, and eight forced fumbles.

Sherrill said he will wait until the fall to name a starting quarterback. The leader in the clubhouse is sophomore Bucky Richardson, from Baton Rouge, who was prepared to sign with LSU until coach Mike Archer told him he would make a great safety. Richardson started five of A&M's last seven games last season and was named the Offensive Player of the Game in the Cotton Bowl. The running game will depend on sophomore Darren Lewis, who gained 668 yards last season.

The Aggies head into 1988 trying to become the first team to win four consecutive SWC titles since Darrell Royal and Texas did it six consecutive seasons, 1968 to '73. Speaking of Texas, Sherrill's record against the hated Longhorns puts into perspective what he has meant to the Aggie-

land faithful. If A&M makes it five consecutive victories over Texas this Thanksgiving, that will equal A&M's victory total over the Longhorns for the previous 27 years.

But maybe the key for A&M is for Sherrill to absorb some heat from his four-year-old son, Braxton. After Texas A&M allowed 429 yards to Texas Tech to lose, 27-21, and drop to 2-2 last September, Braxton boldly informed Pop that two losses were about all the Aggies could afford.

They haven't lost since.

—J. M.

UCLA

7 COACH TERRY DONAHUE, FRESH OFF a sixth consecutive bowl triumph and a 10-2 season, is laden with talent once again at UCLA. But it's young talent. The Bruins must replace 14 starters and will suffer growing pains before the team asserts itself late in the season.

In the season finale against USC, the Bruins will be a far more formidable outfit than the one meeting Nebraska in the second game and upset-minded Washington in the fourth game.

The Nebraska game is a definite roadblock, but another 10-2 season seems quite possible, especially with strong-armed senior quarterback Troy Aikman at the throttle. He completed 178 passes for 2,527 yards and 17 touchdowns last season and may be doing even more passing this year.

UCLA Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A +	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: B —	Linebackers: B
Receivers: B —	Secondary: B —
Offensive Line: C +	Special Teams: A

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: Nebraska, USC

Recruiting Hotbeds

California (77 players), Texas (7)

You Read It Here First

Freshman Maury Toy will win the fullback job alongside tailback Eric Ball, giving UCLA a Toy-Ball backfield known as "the playpen."

If We Were Terry Donahue

We'd wonder if this was going to be the year that the bowl magic runs out. Donahue has won six straight postseason games, a feat that only two other coaches have accomplished (Bobby Dodd and Bear Bryant).

Stat Fact

Entering the 1988 season the Bruins have scored in 193 consecutive games, an NCAA record that stretches back to 1971.

Until the Bruins come together, they will depend on the Heisman Trophy candidate's leadership to carry them. Donahue doesn't deny that.

"I'm anxious to see how the team develops," the coach said. "It's going to be interesting. Offensively, Troy has to be the catalyst. He'll be working with a lot of new people, so he'll have to pull it all together."

"We have the best quarterback we could possibly hope to have. Troy is going to have to carry a lot of the responsibility for the offensive team. People don't want to accept the fact that this is a rebuilding year for us."

Conscious of the Bruins' adolescence, Donahue juggled the schedule so the Cornhuskers wouldn't

be the opening game. Instead, UCLA will host San Diego State in the September 3 opener. Also, the team now will have two weeks to prepare for Washington after playing Long Beach State in their third game.

"The fact is we did lose a lot of people," Aikman said. "You could see that by the [NFL] draft. I watched 10 of our guys drafted, and I figured it's no wonder we were 10-2 last year. We probably should have done better."

Donahue has gaping holes to fill at wide receiver, in the offensive line, and at fullback. Although All-America tailback Gaston Green must be replaced, senior Eric Ball isn't exactly a slouch.

It was Ball who stepped in as a freshman for an injured regular and rushed for a career-high 227 yards and four TDs in a 45-28 romp over Iowa in the 1986 Rose Bowl. Ball has been slowed by injuries since then, yet he managed seven TDs as Green's understudy last season and may be ready to fulfill his promise as a regular.

The Bruins also are thin in experienced receivers, so the major spring experiment on offense had back-up quarterback Brendan McCracken shifting to wide receiver. "He was too good an athlete to be standing next to me on the sideline," Donahue explained.

Junior Frank Cornish, second team all-conference in '87, anchors a green offensive line. Charles Arbuckle, a junior tight end, is being viewed as a potential standout. The same goes for junior placekicker Alfredo Velasco, who was a solid 20 for 24 on field-goal attempts last year.

The defensive standout is outside linebacker Carnell Lake, a second team All-American who was second in Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year voting.

UCLA also will rely heavily on two returning second team all-conference choices—senior nose guard Jim Wahler and senior cornerback Darryl Henley, who doubles as a gifted punt returner.

There's no question the defense will take time to develop, placing added pressure on Aikman. This will be a good team, but it isn't in USC's class—yet.

—N. P.

IOWA

8 DON'T EVER MENTION TO IOWA COACH Hayden Fry that old myth about the Big Ten's Big Two and Little Eight.

Fry will sizzle. Fry will burn. Fry will spit fire. Fry will hit you over the head with a pan.

"If there is still a Big Two in the Big Ten we must be one of the two," Fry says.

Take that, Michigan. Take that, Ohio State.

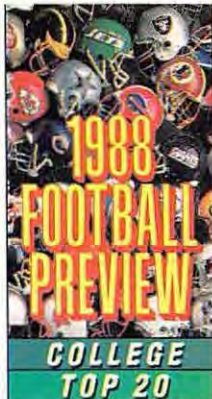
Fry, who is the winningest coach in school history and the first to coach for as long as 10 years, has the facts to back up his words.

□ In the last seven years Iowa has won more games (62) than any team in the Big Ten, winning 10 games in '85 and '87 and nine games in '83 and '86.

□ The Hawkeyes have made seven consecutive bowl appearances, including two trips to the Rose Bowl in the last six years.

□ Iowa has been a Top 20 team in six of the last seven years.

□ In Fry's nine years the Hawkeyes have produced five consensus and 10 first team All-Americans. A total of 46 Iowa players have been



named first team All-Big Ten, and the school has had the all-conference quarterback four of the last five years.

□ Only two schools (Brigham Young and Nebraska) have gained more yardage than the Hawkeyes (438 yards per game) the last five seasons, and Iowa is the No. 1 passing team in college football over the same period.

And to think that before Fry's arrival the Hawkeyes had gone 17 straight years without a winning season. And this year's Iowa team might be Fry's best.

"This team's potential is very similar to last year's," Fry says. "Our biggest positive is knowing who the No. 1 quarterback is."

Iowa Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A —	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: B —	Linebackers: B
Receivers: B	Secondary: B —
Offensive Line: B	Special Teams: B

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 10 • Probable Losses: 0

Tossups: at Michigan State, Michigan

Recruiting Hotbeds

Iowa (43 players), Illinois (18), Missouri (8), Texas (8)

You Read It Here First

Iowa will reach the Rose Bowl for the first time in three years, but the Pac-10 will resume its winning ways at the Hawkeyes' expense.

If We Were Hayden Fry

We'd take our team to a bowl other than the Rose. The Hawkeyes are winless in their last two trips to Pasadena, but have won four of the five other bowls Fry has taken them to.

Stat Fact

Iowa has been No. 1 in pass efficiency in the nation for the past five years.

The quarterback controversy of last season was indeed a circus. Much ballyhooed sophomore Dan McGwire figured to be the player who'd emerge from the battle with Tom Poholsky—who'd pitched some fine relief the year before—and Chuck Hartlieb, whom no one outside of Iowa City and Woodstock, Ill., had ever heard of.

While the pressure to start McGwire was building, Fry stuck by all three of his guns, starting each one of them during the early season games.

That Hartlieb walked away the winner was the second-biggest surprise of the Big Ten season. That he became the all-Big Ten quarterback was the biggest surprise.

That McGwire eventually transferred to San Diego State was no surprise at all.

Hartlieb, a senior, passed for 300 yards or more in five games, threw a record seven TD passes vs. Northwestern, finished third nationally in passing efficiency, and was an academic All-American.

While Fry needs to improve the running game (watch out for sophomore Tony Stewart), shore up the defensive line around All-America nose guard Dave Haight, and reconstruct the secondary, he has the bodies on hand.

In other words, there are no mything links.

—TERRY BOERS

MIAMI

9 JIMMY JOHNSON CHOSE HIS WORDS carefully, deliberately. It was a couple days after his University of Miami team beat Oklahoma for the national championship, 20-14, and Johnson allowed himself to look ahead.

Next year's defense, he said, would be better. The offense, he said, would be more "explosive." Wide receiver Michael Irvin had yet to decide between a final season and the pros, and standout halfback Leonard Conley would be a sophomore.

"The biggest concern I have right now," Johnson said in a euphoric press conference, "is finding a punter."

He was serious. And he continued being serious "right up until we took practice in the spring," he says. "Then I looked around and saw who wasn't there."

Irvin wasn't. He turned pro and became the Dallas Cowboys' first-round pick. Safety Bennie Blades was the top pick of the Detroit Lions. Defensive end Dan Stubbs and wide receivers Brian Blades and Brett Perriman went in the second round. Gone, too, were fullback Melvin Bratton and linebacker George Mira.

If it seems unlikely that the Hurricanes will repeat, remember that last year Miami had to replace Vinny Testaverde, Jerome Brown, Alonzo Highsmith, et al.—and still won the national title.

"We can be a good team," Johnson said. "The only question is how good. We have a lot of holes to fill and we won't have any time to ease [new people] in."

True enough. The Hurricanes kick off the season against Florida State in Miami followed by a game at Michigan. The rest of the schedule isn't conducive to going undefeated, with games against Notre Dame, Louisiana State, Arkansas, and Brigham Young.

Not that the Hurricanes are short of talent. Johnson feels the defensive front seven should be better than last year. Linebacker Bernard Clark, the defensive hero of last season's Orange Bowl, will replace Mira, while Stubbs is the only non-returnee on the defensive line.

The question will be in the secondary. Senior

Miami Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A —	Defensive Line: A —
Running Backs: B	Linebackers: A —
Receivers: C	Secondary: B —
Offensive Line: B	Special Teams: B —

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0

Tossups: Florida State, at Michigan, at Notre Dame

Recruiting Hotbeds

Florida (65 players), New Jersey (8), Illinois (7)

You Read It Here First

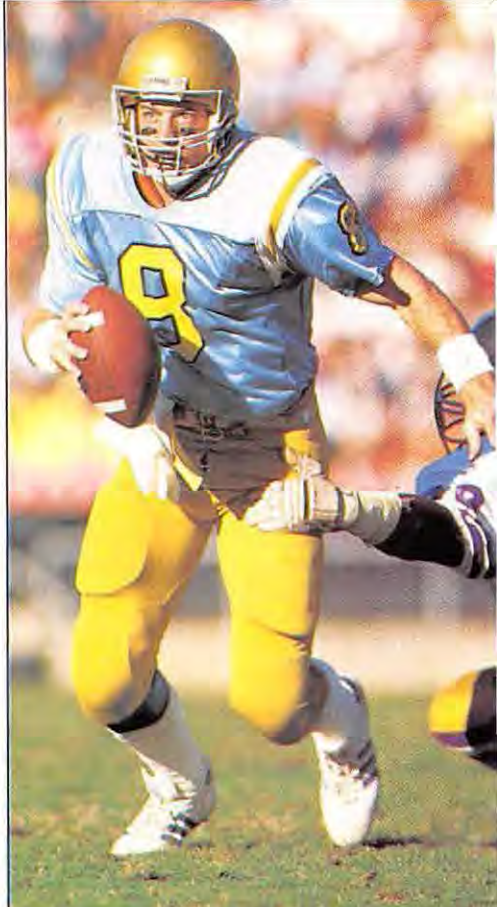
Miami will lose two regular-season games for the first time since 1984.

If We Were Jimmy Johnson

We'd wonder what it takes to repeat. No team has finished atop the AP poll in consecutive seasons since Alabama (1978-79).

Stat Fact

In Steve Walsh's debut as the starting QB, he defeated Florida—something neither Bernie Kosar nor Vinny Testaverde were able to do in their debuts against the Gators.



Aikman will carry the burden of UCLA's Rose Bowl hopes.

cornerback Donald Ellis, Miami's best coverage man, must recover from two offseason knee operations. But, even if Ellis does recover, he will be the only '87 starter returning to the same position. Bubba McDowell, who started at cornerback last year, will move to free safety. Two newcomers—three if Ellis doesn't return—will have to step in.

Offensively, quarterback Steve Walsh (19 TDs, 59% completion rate) returns. The backfield appears solid if Conley (6.4 yards per carry), a 5'9" halfback, and fullback Cleveland Gary (five TDs) stay healthy. But last season's top seven receivers do not return, and only split end Randal Hill appears solid.

"I feel pretty good about this team," Johnson said. "They can make me feel real good about them in the first two games." —DAVE HYDE

NEBRASKA

10 YOU THOUGHT BRODERICK Thomas' favorite pastime was running his mouth. Actually, Nebraska's 6'3", 235-pound All-America outside linebacker is an avid auto racing buff. That's hot rod, not hot dog. His goals in life include bringing the Cornhuskers a checkered flag in the 1988 national championship race, making his mark in pro ball, then becoming the next Dan Pastorini and getting behind the wheel of a dragster.

"When I'm running the 40-yard dash, I pretend I'm in one of those cars, going down the drag strip," Thomas said. Opposing quarterbacks may feel the same way.

Thomas' love for auto racing comes from his father, William Sr., who dabbled in the sport when



"Hey, let me
tell you!"

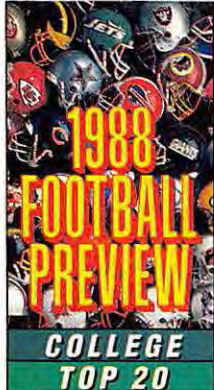
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CONNECTICUT HARTFORD	WCCC-AM/FM	MINNESOTA MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL ST. CLOUD WINONA	WCCO KCLD KWNQ	SOUTH CAROLINA CHARLESTON	WXLY	WYOMING CHEYENNE	KFBQ
FLORIDA JACKSONVILLE MELBOURNE/TITUSVILLE MIAMI/FT. LAUDERDALE NAPLES ORLANDO PENSACOLA SARASOTA/BRADENTON TALLAHASSEE TAMPA	WQIK WMMB WSHE WNOG WDIZ WCOA WMMR/WCTO WTNT WKRL	MISSISSIPPI BILOXI MC COMB MERIDIAN TUPELO	WVMI WAKK WMDN WZLQ	SOUTH DAKOTA ABERDEEN PIERRE SIOUX FALLS	KDMM KGFX KYRC		
GEORGIA AUGUSTA COLUMBUS	WCKJ WFXE	MISSOURI COLUMBIA KANSAS CITY ST. JOSEPH ST. LOUIS MISSOURINET	KTGR KYYS KFEO KMOX/KHTR	TENNESSEE CHATTAHOOGA JOHNSON CITY KNOXVILLE NASHVILLE	WDD WJCV WNOX WSM		
HAWAII HONOLULU	KPOI	MONTANA GREAT FALLS SIDNEY	KEIN KGCH	TEXAS ABILENE AMARILLO BEAUMONT/PORT ARTHUR BIG SPRINGS CORPUS CHRISTI DALLAS HOUSTON KILLEEN/TEMPLE LONGVIEW/MARSHALL LUFKIN/NACOGDOCHES MC ALLEN/BROWNSVILLE SAN ANGELO SAN ANTONIO WICHITA FALLS	KEYJ KDJW-AM/FM KAYD KBYG KHYS-AM/FM KLUV KLUL KIXS/KIIZ KEES KEEE/KJCS KELT KIKY/KQSA KBUC-AM/FM KKOV		
IDAHO TWIN FALLS	KART	NEBRASKA LINCOLN OMAHA/COUNCIL BLUFFS	KFMO KEZQ				
ILLINOIS CHICAGO ROCKFORD STREATOR	WXRT WKMG WIZZ	NEVADA LAS VEGAS RENO	KNUU KONE				
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Broderick and his younger brother, William Jr., were kids. William Sr. drove his sons across Texas, often hundreds of miles to Amarillo, to watch races.

Oklahoma fans will be surprised to discover another facet of Broderick Thomas—his admiration for good football teams that don't wear the Nebraska uniform. That may be difficult to swallow, considering Thomas' mouth headed full throttle into last year's No. 1 showdown with OU. He said he would be "upset if we don't hold them under 10 points" and that he would have the Sooners All-America tight end Keith Jackson "talking to his kneecaps." Oklahoma's 17-7 victory left Thomas with little to say to kneecaps or anything else.

"I don't know if they got any extra motivation from what we said," Thomas said. "You've got to be ready to go to battle every time. They probably won't believe it, but I respect a good team like Oklahoma. You have to respect anybody who can run the option like that."

Nebraska fans have grown tired of the Huskers annually being one of the best teams in the country, but never the best. Osborne has been nationally ranked nearly each season and compiled the third-best record among active coaches. But he hasn't brought Nebraska across the finish line first, and Husker fans remember all too well the national-title years of 1971 and '72 under Bob Devaney, who handed the job to Osborne in 1973. That was the same year that Barry Switzer took over at Oklahoma, and Husker fans cringe at Osborne's 4-12 record against Switzer.

Nebraska Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A —	Defensive Line: C
Running Backs: B —	Linebackers: B
Receivers: B	Secondary: A —
Offensive Line: B	Special Teams: A —

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: at Oklahoma, at UCLA, Texas A&M (at East Rutherford, N.J.)

Recruiting Hotbeds

Nebraska (48 players), Texas (15), California (11)

You Read It Here First

The Cornhuskers will lose to rival Oklahoma for the fifth straight year. Nebraska's last win over the Sooners came during its 1983 undefeated regular season.

If We Were Tom Osborne

We'd make sure the team realizes that Oklahoma isn't the only team on the schedule capable of beating them.

Stat Fact

Steve Taylor is the Huskers' fastest QB ever, running the 40 in 4.54 seconds.

Actually, Osborne's near-miss history is commendable because Nebraska doesn't play a one-game schedule. This season the Huskers begin with the Kickoff Classic against Texas A&M, and games at UCLA and at home against Arizona State.

If Nebraska is to make a run at No. 1, it will need some help on a defensive line that lost tackles Neil Smith and Tim Rother and middle guard Law-

rence Pete. The offense figures to make up for the loss of Keith (Touchdown) Jones at I-back with senior Tyreese Knox. Senior Steve Taylor has established himself as more than just an option quarterback (five TD passes certainly convinced UCLA) and now must silence critics who say he has difficulty performing in crucial games.

If Nebraska can do all that, Thomas may realize his next goal. All that will remain is to conquer the National Football League and the National Hot Rod Association. —J. M.

AUBURN

11 THREE YEARS AGO, IT CAME TO Auburn coach Pat Dye in a vision—having to physically overpower opponents every year was asking the impossible of his players.

And since winning, which leads to job security, is more important than trying to be a macho man in the brutal Southeastern Conference, Dye decided that throwing the football was the better part of valor.

He did it, but that doesn't mean he has to like it.

"It sure eats at my craw that we can't develop a hard-nosed running game in spring practice anymore," Dye complained.

After a 3-3 finish (for fifth place) in the SEC in 1985, Auburn jumped to 4-2 and second behind LSU in '86, when Jeff Burger became the most prolific Tigers passer since Pat Sullivan. Last year the Tigers improved to 5-1 and first place with even more passing.

Auburn Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B	Defensive Line: A —
Running Backs: B —	Linebackers: B —
Receivers: A —	Secondary: B
Offensive Line: A —	Special Teams: A —

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: Tennessee, at LSU, Georgia

Recruiting Hotbeds

Alabama (70 players), Georgia (21), Florida (15)

You Read It Here First

The offense will depend on Lawyer Tillman's game-winning plays to win games against tough SEC opponents.

If We Were Pat Dye

We'd wonder how OLB Craig Ogletree is going to fill Aundray Bruce's shoes.

Stat Fact

Since Wayne Hall took over as defensive line coach in 1981, all but two Auburn starters have been named first team All-SEC.

Burger, who spent much time meeting with local police, Auburn academic officials, and NCAA representatives, is gone, but don't look for Auburn to abandon Dye's new passing fancy.

However, because the Tigers now have as many fine wide receivers as it had running backs during the heyday of the Wishbone not so many years ago, Dye can take comfort in his new approach to winning.

Reggie Slack, a junior with some experience (he replaced Burger as the starter in a 38-7 victory over Mississippi State last year when Burger was held out because of an eligibility crisis), is set at quarterback.

Wide receiver Lawyer Tillman and tight end

Walter Reeves are among the very best in the nation at their positions. They are members of a strong receiving corps that also includes Freddy Weygand, Alexander Wright, Greg Taylor, and back-up tight end Lee Marke Sellers.

"I don't know of any team in the nation that has a better group of receivers than we do," Dye said.

The running game, weak at the beginning of the '87 season but growing stronger every week, should be improved.

Auburn has the ability to run. But more effective, however, is a defense and kicking game that should be second to none.

Tracy Rocker, Ron Stallworth, and Benji Roland are all-league candidates along the interior defensive line, as is free safety Carlo Cheattom (who can play corner or strong safety, too).

Win Lyle is an accurate field-goal kicker with excellent range, and punter Brian Shulman could be the best in the college game.

—DAVID DAVIDSON

SOUTH CAROLINA

12 MUCH HAS HAPPENED SINCE that cold night last November 21 when the Gamecocks stamped the seal of success on their football program with a 20-7 victory over dreaded rival Clemson.

First came an ugly 30-13 loss to LSU in the Gator Bowl; next was an ugly mess in the athletic department that led to the firing of athletic director Bob Marcum. The departure of Marcum nearly prompted coach Joe Morrison to resign, but Marcum convinced him to stay.

Life has settled down around Columbia finally, and the big question is how effective the Gamecocks can be in their new pro-style offense. The Run-and-Shoot, implemented two years ago to take advantage of the many talents of quarterback Todd Ellis, gradually disappeared last fall, and when Morrison lured Al Groh away from the Atlanta Falcons to be his new offensive coordinator, the Run-and-Shoot officially died.

Ellis, who has a shot at the Heisman, will do

South Carolina Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: A —	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: A —	Linebackers: B —
Receivers: C	Secondary: C +
Offensive Line: B —	Special Teams: A —

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: Florida St.
Tossups: Georgia, at Clemson

Recruiting Hotbeds

South Carolina (30 players), Georgia (28), North Carolina (22)

You Read It Here First

Barring injury, QB Todd Ellis will become the NCAA career passing leader before leaving South Carolina. San Jose State's Todd Santos set the current record of 11,425 yards. Ellis' career yardage is currently 6,226 and he has two years of eligibility left.

If We Were Joe Morrison

We'd wait at least another two years before listening to offers to become head coach of the New York Giants.

Stat Fact

In two seasons Ellis has passed for more than 200 yards in all but four games. He's also had eight 300-yard games.

1988 FOOTBALL PREVIEW COLLEGE TOP 20

more dropback passing this year even though he's lost most of his receivers.

What Ellis and the Gamecocks do have, though, is tailback Harold Green, who rushed for more than 1,000 yards last year. The new pro-style attack should further accentuate Green's skills while giving Ellis the chance to weave his magic.

Just a junior, Ellis has already taken his place as a legend in the South Carolina program. He's passed for more than 300 yards eight times in two years and has completed 57.8% of his passes.

Ellis has room to improve, though. He has a nasty habit of throwing interceptions—tossing 24 last year, including four in the Gator Bowl.

"We should be more effective against different types of teams than we were with the Run-and-Shoot," Ellis said.

Opponents might take advantage of the South Carolina defense if it doesn't solidify a secondary that lost three starters. The Gamecocks drove opponents crazy last year with their new blitzing scheme installed by defensive whiz Joe Lee Dunn. South Carolina blitzed 75% of the time.

The last time South Carolina had a bowl year was 1984, when they went to the Gator Bowl. In 1985 the program slipped back down to 5-6. That shouldn't happen this time, though don't count on another victory over Clemson. —R. G.

MICHIGAN

13 PSSST. DID YOU KNOW THAT MICHIGAN is still a member of the Big Ten and plans on playing football this season? Imagine that. And do you want to know something else? The Wolverines just might treat opposing teams the same way Bo Schembechler said he would treat those confounded kidney stones that cropped up during the course of last season.

"I'm gonna go in and blow the hell out of 'em,"

Michigan Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: C +	Defensive Line: A -
Running Backs: B -	Linebackers: B
Receivers: B +	Secondary: C +
Offensive Line: A -	Special Teams: B +

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 7 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: at Notre Dame, Miami, Michigan State, at Iowa

Recruiting Hotbeds

Michigan (33 players), Ohio (19), Illinois (9)

You Read It Here First

Mike Gillette, the most proficient kicker in Michigan history, will be taken in the early rounds of the NFL draft and be offered a job advertising close shaves.

If We Were Bo Schembechler

We'd start the best of the three redshirt freshmen at QB. Both Demetrius Brown and Michael Taylor have completed less than 50% of their passes. Both are also seniors; The Wolverines should start planning for the future.

Stat Fact

All-America DT Mark Messner ended the '87 season with 50 tackles and 10 sacks.



Rocker and Tillman will be rocking Auburn's tough SEC foes.

was Schembechler's rather indelicate quote at the time he entered the hospital.

You'd have to go back many years to find a time when the Wolverines were being as overlooked as they are this year. Michigan State and Iowa, it has been said, will be the teams most likely to vie for the league title and the Rose Bowl trip that follows.

Never mind that in the last 19 years Michigan has won or shared 11 Big Ten championships and has been ranked in the Top 10 in the final polls 15 times.

But even if history means nothing, remember that 16 of his 22 starters return from the team that defeated Alabama in last year's Hall of Fame Bowl.

While it's true that the two players missing on offense will be Jamie Morris, the most prodigious ground gainer in school history, and All-America tackle "Jumbo" Elliott, Bo won't have to search long to find able bodies.

He'll replace Morris with the combination of Tony Boles and Tracy Williams, who are both juniors. "Boles and Tracy have shown some real talent," Schembechler says. It also would be wise to keep in mind the name of yet another junior, Allen Jefferson, who was going great guns last season before breaking an arm in the Iowa game. He was hampered for most of last spring with a leg injury.

As for the offensive line, not only is All-Big Ten pick Mike Husar back at one tackle, Elliot's spot will be manned by either Tom Dohring, who started six games last season, or 322-pound Greg Skrepenak.

The guards are veterans David Chester and Michael Dames, while the man in the middle—center John Vitale—is, according to Schembechler, as good as anyone he's ever coached. "There aren't many in the country better than Vitale—maybe not any," Schembechler says.

Senior Demetrius Brown is the incumbent at

quarterback, but Schembechler, unhappy at times with Brown's performance last year, took a long look at three redshirt freshmen—Eric Bush, Wilbur Odom, and Ken Sollom during the spring.

Defensively, the Wolverines will build around a combat-tested line that includes All-America tackle Mark Messner, who had 10 sacks. The only real problem will be in the secondary, where three starters are gone. "We need more quarterback production, and we'll have to settle on a defensive secondary," Schembechler says. "But I think we'll be a better team than we were last year."

Pssst. Hear that?

—T. B.

ARKANSAS

14 FORCED INTO BEING GROUND Hogs last season, the Razorbacks will present enough offensive diversity this season that opposing defenses actually can break from the huddle warning, "watch for the pass!"

Arkansas' offense was classic . . . as in Venus de Milo. The Razorbacks ranked 99th among the 104 NCAA Division I teams. The only time the Razorbacks passed for more than 110 yards was a 218-yard effort against Houston, which finished last in the nation in pass defense. The Hogs passed 14.3% of the time, compared to a national average of 37.9%.

None of this was lost on the frustrated Arkansas fans, who were led to believe that their team would win the SWC for the first time in 12 years. The team and the fans were left feeling empty with a 9-4 finish. Arkansas did make it to the Liberty Bowl, but Georgia kicked a field goal on the final play to win after quarterback Greg Thomas, who moments earlier was voted the game's MVP, threw an interception with 46 seconds to play.

Thomas has graduated, back-up Quinn Grovey has survived his earn-while-you-learn season, and

head coach Ken Hatfield has altered his once-inflexible Flexbone offense by adding a wingback who can run pass patterns.

Arkansas Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B -	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: A -	Linebackers: B -
Receivers: B +	Secondary: A -
Offensive Line: C -	Special Teams: B +

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: 1
at Miami

Tossups: at Texas, Texas A&M

Recruiting Hotbeds

Arkansas (69 players), Texas (29), Missouri (6)

You Read It Here First

Coach Hatfield will threaten to put Freddie Childress on the Refrigerator Perry Diet if he doesn't keep his weight down to 320 pounds.

If We Were Ken Hatfield

We'd give the ball to HB James Rouse in clutch situations. He's one of the few proven members of the offense.

Stat Fact

Rouse is one of only three Razorbacks ever to rush for over 1,000 yards in a season. The others were Dickey Morton (1972, '73) and Ben Cowins (1976, '77, '78).

"I came in blind," said Grove, a Duncan, Okla., product who decided not to sign with Oklahoma so he could play as a freshman with Arkansas. However, he spent much of the year slowed by a groin pull and a bad ankle—injuries hardly conducive to running an option offense. "It's my team now," Grove said, "and I'm going with it. I'm looking forward to taking care of business."

Flexbone and wingback aside, Arkansas can still look to 222-pound halfback James Rouse. As a junior last season Rouse not only led the Razorbacks in rushing (1,004 yards) but also was second in receiving.

Arkansas' new offense will feature junior Tony Holmes (14 rushes for 51 yards) as the wingback. The addition of the wingback and the commitment to throwing at least 10 more passes per game should cut down on Grove's trips to the trainer's room. "A lot of quick passes should nullify the pass rush," Grove said. "If the defense [continues to rush the passer], they leave a lot of areas open. We're not going to run the option as much, so I'm not going to be hit as much."

In four of Arkansas' five conference victories, Grove accounted for the winning play. Said Hatfield: "Quinn wants to be the complete quarterback."

Quarterback coach David Lee said, "You wouldn't call Quinn a dropback passer by any stretch of the imagination, but he can hurt you throwing. He's so much more confident. His biggest asset still is his ability to make people miss him."

—J. M.

GEORGIA

15 IN THE SOUTH, THEY CALL IT "smashmouth." That's the way University of Georgia head coach Vince Dooley's teams play football—by grinding their opponents into the turf with huge linemen and relentless running backs.

With the possibility of four all-conference caliber running backs available in 1988, the Bulldogs' bite could be formidable.

The problem, however, is an academic one. There's no doubt that tailback Rodney Hampton, who gained 890 yards on 126 carries (7.1 per tote) while time-sharing as a true freshman with starter Lars Tate in '87, will return, as will fullback Alphonso Ellis, who started 10 games as a true freshman.

Those two alone should make Georgia a strong running team, but the Dawgs could be even stronger if tailback Tim Worley and fullback Keith Henderson resolve classroom problems.

Worley (a 6'2", 216-pound junior) was Georgia's No. 2 rusher as a freshman in 1985 with 627 yards on 116 carries; but he missed most of the '86 season with a knee injury, then flunked out prior to last season.

Henderson started in 1986 and was the No. 2 rusher with 523 yards on 96 carries (5.4 average), but he, too, hit dire straits grade-wise and joined Worley for a year of academic reform school at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M Junior College.

Only the guards must be replaced up front, and with a new quarterback Georgia is likely to run the ball more than ever. Wayne Johnson, who has been effective off the bench in place of quarterback James Jackson for two years, is being pushed by redshirt freshman Greg Talley, whose strength is making lots of good decisions and very few mistakes.

Georgia Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: C +	Defensive Line: B
Running Backs: B +	Linebackers: B +
Receivers: B	Secondary: B -
Offensive Line: B +	Special Teams: B +

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: Tennessee, at Auburn, at South Carolina

Recruiting Hotbeds

Georgia (51 players), Florida (9), South Carolina (7)

You Read It Here First

In his 25th year as Georgia's head coach, Vince Dooley will win eight games and become the 10th Division I-A coach to reach the 200-victory mark—but he'll fall short of a seventh SEC title.

If We Were Vince Dooley

We'd decide on a quarterback early (preferably senior Wayne Johnson) and stick with him.

Stat Fact

DE Richard Tardits, whose 17 career sacks ranks third in Georgia history, walked on during '85 spring practice, never having played football before.

Defensively, the Bulldogs under Dooley have run from a split-tackle formation in which eight players were strung out along the line of scrimmage. In recent years, however, Georgia has run short of linemen and the secondary has been vulnerable to the pass. So the defense has been adjusted to add an outside linebacker and a fourth defensive back (a strong safety)—converting the alignment into a more traditional 3-4.

With an experienced front line and solid linebackers returning, plus more talented secondary

personnel, significant improvement was made on pass defense during spring practice. —D. D.

PENN STATE

16 STEP RIGHT UP, CHECK OUT these Nittany Lions, the only team with a four-headed quarterback, a one-legged tailback, and a couple of disappearing wide receivers.

The task for ringmaster Joe Paterno is to put all of this together to create one of the greatest shows in the country.

Penn St. Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: C +	Defensive Line: B -
Running Backs: A (with Thomas)	Linebackers: B +
Receivers: B -	Secondary: B +
Offensive Line: B	Special Teams: B

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: at Alabama, Pitt, at Notre Dame

Recruiting Hotbeds

Pennsylvania (51 players), New Jersey (24), Ohio (9)

You Read It Here First

The Nittany Lions will start slowly, but by November they'll be playing like a top 10 team.

If We Were Joe Paterno

We wouldn't hesitate to make a quick change at quarterback if the team gets off to a rocky start.

Stat Fact

Brian Chizmar led the team in tackles (69) and interceptions (three) in 1987.

The early betting line on the quarterback race lists junior Tom Bill as the favorite, with senior Lance Lonergan running a close second, freshman Tony Sacca a dark horse, and redshirt freshman Doug Sieg a long shot. However, the longest shot on the roster is junior Jay Paterno, a walk-on who won't get any preferential treatment just because he's the coach's son.

The most intriguing contender is Sacca, a strong-armed, 6'5" thrower from New Jersey whose name appeared on all of the high school All-America teams.

What about the Paterno kid?

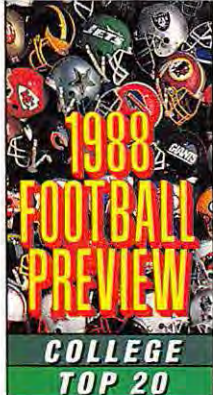
"I've liked him for a long time," the coach said with a smile. After the younger Paterno threw a pass into the ground during the spring game, the coach said, "Now he's starting to look like his dad."

The coach could be looking for a starting tailback if Blair Thomas is not fully recovered from offseason knee surgery. The shifty senior was the team's leading rusher (1,414 yards) and receiver and accounted for 13 of PSU's 23 offensive TDs.

Thomas spent most of his spring in the whirlpool. He can't run for the Heisman Trophy unless he's able to run on dry land in the fall.

"It's tough that one day it's fine and another day it's sore and I don't know why," said the 190-pound senior. "If I'm not at 100%, then I'll redshirt and play the following year. I want my next season to be a full season. I won't come back any other way."

Wideout Ray Roundtree's career at Penn State came to an unexpected end when the NCAA denied a fifth year of eligibility. Paterno's receiving corps could be further depleted if speedster



Michael Thimpson makes the U.S. Olympic track team and skips the 1988 football season.

"We still haven't identified the kids who really want to make this a big-league football team," said Paterno. "People have to be realistic. This team is going to struggle. It's going to have to get some things done on sheer intensity."

Possibly the most intense of all the Nittany Lions is senior guard Steve Wisniewski, one of the premier offensive linemen in the country. He and center Roger Duffy anchor the line. Penn State, a.k.a. Linebacker U, returns a pair of outstanding linebackers in Keith Karpinski and Scott Gob and a solid secondary built around Brian Chizmar and Eddie Johnson.

"We'll be unpredictable," said Paterno, "because you don't know how the young players will react. It should be exciting." —P.A.

TEXAS

17 IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY FOR A Heisman Trophy race. Tim Brown hadn't even left Manhattan after picking up the trophy last year when Brent Musburger proclaimed Penn State's Blair Thomas the favorite in 1988.

But Texas has its own candidate in Eric Metcalf, who finished third in the nation in all-purpose yardage, had four runs for 50 or more yards, returned punts and kickoffs, was a dangerous receiver coming out of the backfield, and was voted the SWC's Offensive Player of the Year. Texas, not expected to be a factor in the SWC race under first-year coach David McWilliams, came within one victory of going to the Cotton Bowl, finishing 7-5 with a Bluebonnet Bowl victory over Pitt.

Metcalf's versatility was evident in a 16-14 upset of Arkansas, when he was limited to 76 yards

Texas Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B -	Defensive Line: A -
Running Backs: A -	Linebackers: B +
Receivers: B	Secondary: C -
Offensive Line: B +	Special Teams: B +

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 8 • Probable Losses: Oklahoma
Tossups: Arkansas, Texas A&M

Recruiting Hotbeds

Texas (103 players), California (2), Louisiana (2)

You Read It Here First

If Eric Metcalf chooses Olympic competition, the Longhorns will get off to a losing start and Metcalf can forget about a victory parade in Austin even if he wins a gold.

If We Were David McWilliams

We'd tell Metcalf that the weather's lousy in Seoul this time of year and the Olympics are overrated.

Stat Fact

In his junior year, Metcalf rushed for 1,161 yards and 10 TDs. In 1971, his junior year, Terry Metcalf rushed for 1,673 yards and 29 TDs at Long Beach State.

rushing but caught 11 passes for 90 yards. Said Arkansas coach Ken Hatfield: "If he's a wide receiver [which McWilliams almost made him last spring] you can try to deny him the ball. But when he lines up back there and they just pitch it to him, all you can do is key on him."

The early part of Texas' schedule will provide Metcalf, a world-class long jumper and potential Olympian, a chance to impress Heisman voters. The Longhorns open on ESPN against BYU, then face New Mexico (ranked 104th and last in Division I defense last season), North Texas (a Division I-AA school), and Rice (102nd in total defense). Strength of opponent was directly related to Metcalf's rushing success last season. He averaged 130.7 yards against Texas' six non-bowl opponents and 75.4 against the five bowl teams.

At least he shouldn't feel any parental pressure. Said his father, Terry, the former NFL star: "Some people say he has big shoes to fill. He wears 9½, and he fits them very well." —J.M.

TENNESSEE

18 IT WON'T TAKE LONG FOR THE jury to return with a verdict on Tennessee football this season. The Volunteers will play four Southeastern Conference championship contenders—Georgia, LSU, Auburn, and Alabama—by the third weekend in October. After that, it should be a cakewalk with games against Memphis State, Boston College, Ole Miss, Kentucky, and Vanderbilt.

Tennessee Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B +	Defensive Line: B -
Running Backs: B +	Linebackers: B
Receivers: B -	Secondary: C +
Offensive Line: B -	Special Teams: B -

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 7 • Probable Losses: 0
Tossups: at Georgia, LSU, at Auburn, Alabama

Recruiting Hotbeds

Tennessee (36 players), Ohio (7), Florida (6)

You Read It Here First

LB Keith DeLong will follow in his father Steve's footsteps and become a candidate for the Outland Trophy.

If We Were Johnny Majors

We'd work on the pass defense. The Vols were ninth in the SEC in that category last season and can't afford a similar performance against the caliber of teams on their schedule.

Stat Fact

As a freshman last season, Reggie Cobb tied SEC records for TDs (20) and points (120) and finished with the second-highest rushing total in Tennessee history (1,197 yards).

"This school has never played a more difficult schedule," said head coach Johnny Majors. "I'd rather play an easier one, but you get what you get. The new format [the Southeastern Conference goes from a six-game to a seven-game league schedule this season] will make it more difficult for SEC schools to win national championships and play in major bowl games."

With depth at quarterback, running back, and wide receiver, the Vols are loaded at the skill positions. However, three starters along the offensive line must be replaced, which means that tailback Reggie Cobb—who gained 1,197 yards (5.1 per

carry) and scored 20 touchdowns as a redshirt freshman a year ago—may find less room to run in 1988.

Tennessee certainly doesn't lack size along the front. The candidates at guard and tackle include 6'3", 267-pound Doug Baird—the runt of the litter—and 6'3", 280-pound Ray Robinson.

Senior quarterback Jeff Francis lends stability and confidence to the Volunteers offense. Because of his presence under pressure, Tennessee was able to come from behind in the fourth quarter in five games last season to avert defeat. Francis completed 121 of 201 passes last season (60%) and suffered only eight interceptions.

He has an excellent group of receivers, including Terence Cleveland (45 total catches for 329 yards, 25.3 per catch, and eight touchdowns in his first two seasons) and Thomas Woods (32 receptions for 417 yards in his first two seasons).

Defensively, Tennessee gave up 224 points in 12 regular-season games last season, and Johnny Majors must find replacements for six starters.

—D.D.

MICHIGAN STATE

19 THE ONLY BAD RAP AGAINST Rose Bowl champion Michigan State last year had to do with coach George Perles' offense. It sounded like a bad rap song:

*White's movin' to the left, White's movin' to the right,
White's movin' up the middle. Be sure and grab him tight.*

In other words, opposing defenders didn't have to fire until they saw Lorenzo White in their eyes.

But as the Spartans bid to become the first Big Ten team in history to win back-to-back Rose Bowls, the great White is gone. That doesn't, however, mean that Perles is going to turn tail and run to the passing game. Rather, Perles is going to run two—and perhaps three or four—tailbacks during the course of a game. "I love to shuffle them in and out," says Perles. "I grab one by each collar, push 'em in, and push 'em out."

The man you can expect to be pushed the

Michigan St. Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B	Defensive Line: B +
Running Backs: B +	Linebackers: B +
Receivers: B -	Secondary: B
Offensive Line: B +	Special Teams: C

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 7 • Probable Losses: at Florida St.

Tossups: Notre Dame, Iowa, at Michigan

Recruiting Hotbeds

Michigan (53 players), Ohio (13), Florida (5), New York (5)

You Read It Here First

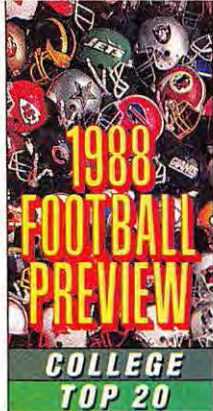
Percy Snow will put the freeze on opposing offenses en route to finishing in the top five in the Butkus Award voting.

If We Were George Perles

We'd be wondering how many tailbacks it takes to replace Lorenzo White. Blake Ezor is capable, but he can't do it alone.

Stat Fact

Wide receiver Andre Rison needs just seven catches to pass Ted Jones' MSU record of 118 career receptions. Rison also is 312 yards away from breaking Kirk Gibson's 2,347 career receiving yards record.



hardest is junior redshirt Blake Ezor, who's been White's understudy for two years. The 5'10", 180-pound Ezor, one of the fastest players (4.35 in the 40) in the Big Ten, gained 617 yards last season, averaging 4.6 yards per carry.

"I've been in Lorenzo's shadow, and now I want to do as well as he did," Ezor says. "I gained confidence when

Coach would take a Heisman candidate out and run me in the fourth quarter [against Ohio State and against USC in the Rose Bowl]."

No matter who has the ball, he'll likely find room to maneuver behind an offensive line that returns four starters, including 303-pound All-America tackle Tony Mandarich, whom Perles calls "the finest offensive lineman I've ever coached." They should provide security for quarterback Bobby

McAllister, who needs to prove that he isn't a tailback dressed in quarterback's clothing.

As for defense, Perles has few concerns. Eight regulars are back from a unit that was No. 1 in the country against the rush and No. 2 in total defense. "If we can avoid injuries," Perles says, "I'm sure we can go a long way."

And that's a rap.

—T.B.

WASHINGTON

20 THE HUSKIES ARE A SOLID PRE-season choice more on coach Don James' impeccable reputation than on merit. The Huskies finished a so-so 4-3-1 in the Pac-10 last season (7-4-1 overall) and landed only one player on the all-conference squad. Their quarterback is new, and three starting linebackers must be replaced.

The Huskies are iffy, yet they command respect because of James, who has a streak of nine consecutive bowl appearances and needs only two

more victories to tie John McKay as the winningest coach in Pac-10 history.

Washington's strength entering 1988 is on the line. If games are won in the trenches, the Huskies will do some damage. The best offensive lineman is 296-pound senior tackle Mike Zandofsky, the lone returning all-conference pick.

James is placing strong-armed junior Cary Conklin at quarterback, where he was pressed into duty down the stretch last year after Chris Chandler was injured in the ninth game. "He played in three pressure games, so that experience will help him this season," James noted.

Flanker Brian Slater is the deep threat, but the Huskies are lacking depth and quality at the receiver position, so the attack should be more run-oriented, especially if talented tailback Vince Weathersby bounces back from a shoulder injury that kept him out of spring football. Quietly and efficiently, Weathersby has rushed for 2,029 yards and caught 100 passes as a Husky.

"People don't look at Weathersby as a game-

MAJOR CONFERENCE PREDICTIONS

ACC PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
Clemson	7-0	10-1
Maryland	5-2	7-4
Wake Forest	5-2	8-3
North Carolina St.	3-3-1	5-5-1
Duke	3-3-1	5-5-1
North Carolina	2-4-1	3-7-1
Virginia	1-6	4-7
Georgia Tech	0-6-1	2-8-1

BIG EIGHT PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
Oklahoma	7-0	11-0
Nebraska	5-2	9-3
Missouri	4-2-1	7-3-1
Colorado	4-3	7-4
Oklahoma St.	4-3	7-4
Kansas	1-5-1	2-8-1
Kansas St.	1-6	3-8
Iowa St.	1-6	2-8-1

BIG 10 PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
Iowa	7-1	10-1
Michigan	6-2	8-3
Michigan St.	6-2	7-4
Ohio St.	4-3	6-5
Indiana	3-3-1	6-4-1
Illinois	3-4-1	5-5-1
Purdue	2-4-1	3-7-1
Wisconsin	2-5	4-7
Minnesota	2-5-1	4-6-1
Northwestern	1-7	2-9

IVY LEAGUE PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
Harvard	6-1	8-2
Yale	6-1	8-2
Princeton	5-2	7-3
Cornell	4-3	5-5
Penn	3-4	5-5
Dartmouth	2-5	4-6
Columbia	1-6	2-8
Brown	1-6	2-8

PAC-10 PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
USC	8-0	10-1
UCLA	7-1	10-1
Washington	5-3	8-3
Arizona	5-3	7-4
California	3-4	6-4-1
Washington St.	3-4-1	4-6-1
Oregon	3-5	6-5-1
Arizona St.	2-5	3-7-1
Stanford	2-6	4-7
Oregon St.	0-7-1	2-8-1

SEC PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
Auburn	5-1-1	9-1-1
Georgia	5-2	8-3
Tennessee	4-2-1	9-2-1
Alabama	4-2-1	6-4-1
LSU	4-2-1	6-4-1
Florida	4-3	7-4
Vanderbilt	4-3	7-4
Mississippi	2-5	4-7
Kentucky	1-6	4-7
Mississippi St.	0-7	2-9

SWC PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
Texas A&M	6-1	10-2
Arkansas	5-1-1	8-2-1
Texas	4-3	7-4
TCU	4-3	5-6
Houston	3-3-1	5-5-1
Texas Tech	3-4	4-7
Baylor	2-5	6-5
Rice	0-7	2-9

WAC PREDICTIONS

	Conf.	Overall
BYU	7-1	9-3
UTEP	6-2	9-3
Air Force	5-3	9-3
Hawaii	4-3-1	5-6-1
Wyoming	4-4	6-6
San Diego St.	3-4-1	3-6-2
Colorado St.	3-5	3-8
Utah	2-6	4-7
New Mexico	1-7	3-9

INDEPENDENTS

	Record
Army	5-6
Boston College	6-5
Cincinnati	5-6
East Carolina	6-5
Florida St.	11-0
Holy Cross	8-3
Louisville	5-6
Memphis St.	3-7-1
Miami (Fla.)	9-2
Navy	3-7-1
Notre Dame	9-2
Penn St.	8-3
Pittsburgh	7-4
Rutgers	6-5
South Carolina	9-2
Southern Mississippi	5-6
SW Louisiana	7-4
Syracuse	4-7
Temple	3-6-2
Tulane	4-6-1
Tulsa	3-8
Virginia Tech	4-7
West Virginia	7-4

BOWL MATCHUP PREDICTIONS

Orange: Florida St. over Oklahoma
Rose: USC over Iowa
Sugar: Notre Dame over Auburn
Fiesta: Clemson over UCLA
Cotton: Texas A&M over Miami
Citrus: Nebraska over South Carolina
Gator: Georgia over Penn St.
Sun: Michigan over Arkansas
Aloha: Washington over Tennessee
Bluebonnet: Texas over Missouri
Peach: Michigan St. over Maryland
Liberty: Alabama over Pittsburgh
Freedom: Arizona over UTEP
Holiday: Ohio St. over BYU
Hall of Fame: Florida over Colorado
All-American: West Virginia over Air Force
Independence: LSU over Wake Forest
California: Kent St. over San Jose St.

breaking back, but he's a very solid football player," James noted. "He's tough with the football, he can block, and he can catch the ball."

Fullback is the position with the most depth, featuring the one-two punch of Aaron Jenkins and Tony Covington, who combined for 900 yards and 12 TDs last year to complement Weathersby's 682-yard contribution.

Washington Preseason Report Card

Quarterbacks: B- Defensive Line: B+
Running Backs: A- Linebackers: C
Receivers: B- Secondary: B+
Offensive Line: B+ Special Teams: C

Schedule Breakdown

Definite Wins: 9 • Probable Losses:

USC, UCLA

Tossups: 0

Recruiting Hotbeds

Washington (63 players), California (41), Oregon (8)

You Read It Here First

Vince Weathersby and Aaron Jenkins will be the Pac-10's leading rushing tandem.

If We Were Don James

We'd lose some sleep wondering if moving Ricky Andrews to inside linebacker from his '87 starting position at rover was such a hot idea. If Darryl Hall doesn't do the job, we'd consider reshuffling the defense.

Stat Fact

After All-Pac-10 offensive lineman Mike Zandofsky moved from right guard to right tackle last season, the Huskies rushing yardage increased by an average of 69.9 yards per game.

DO YOU HAVE KNEE PAIN?

- Aching and tenderness around the knee cap after a day of activity, (running, jumping, aerobics, etc.).
- Aggravated by stair climbing, long periods of standing, walking, golf, etc.
- Stiffness after prolonged sitting.

These symptoms indicate you may have knee cap degeneration. This disorder is a common problem, regardless of age, occupation and athletic or leisure activity.

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Defense, long the Huskies' strong suit, may be less formidable at the beginning of the season because of the uncertainty at linebacker. The standout defender going in is junior tackle Dennis Brown (6'4", 302).

"We've lost only one player in each of the lines, so there's no question they are our strengths entering the season," James said. "Zandofsky is a pretty complete offensive lineman, and Brown is a 300-pounder with lateral quickness. The depth in both lines is very encouraging."

The Huskies will compensate for a lack of experience at linebacker with a faster unit in 1988. Inside linebacking was so wiped out by graduation, senior Ricky Andrews shifts from the outside. The most experienced outside linebacker is Greg Travis.

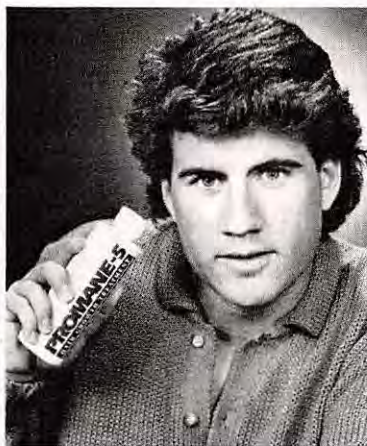
"I hope the move of Ricky inside is a good one," James said. "We have some fine athletes who will emerge, but they lack experience."

Fortunately, James is blessed with a veteran secondary, with five experienced players returning. Rover Darryl Hall and cornerback Art Malone have started most of three seasons.

"We're in pretty good shape for nickel schemes," James noted. "The front and back of our defense appear to be OK, with good experience. Overall, I like our defensive talent."

That's an old refrain. The James Gang seemingly always is proficient in holding opponents in check. With the rest of the conference down, the old days are back in the Pac-10. It comes down to the Los Angeles schools ruling the roost and Washington trying to knock them off it, though that may be asking too much of the Huskies this season.

—N. P. ■



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BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Fans long for the good old times, when the Raiders were bad news, before Darth Vader went Hollywood

By MIKE DOWNEY

C'MON, ADMIT IT. DIDN'T YOU love your love-hate relationship with the Raiders? Didn't they kill you? Wasn't it a howl to hear about John Matuszak, who lived out of the trunk of his

Lincoln Continental Mark V, and subsisted on a diet of Crown Royal booze and Cheese Whiz on bagels? Wasn't it a hoot to read about Ken Stabler, who once shackled up with a woman who called herself Wickedly Wonderful Wanda, a woman who tried to cook frozen TV dinners without taking them out of the cartons? Wasn't it wonderful to check in with

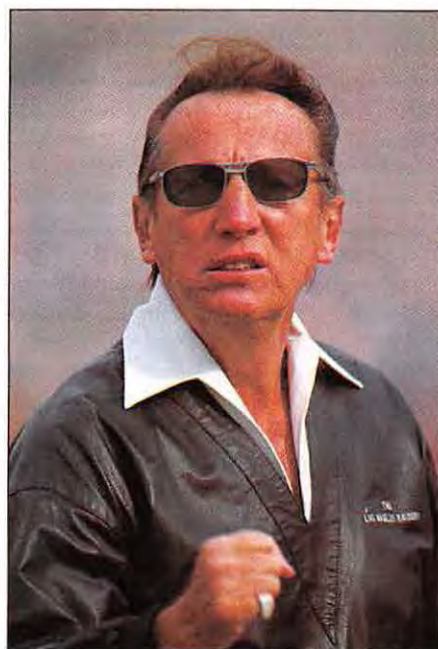
Lester Hayes, who referred to money as "dead presidents," and regaled you with tales of his otherworld identity as a Jedi warrior?

What about Darth Raider himself, Al Davis, with his hipster haircut and his cool-dude shades and his willingness to hire more swashbucklers and cutthroats than his personal idol, Long John Black And Silver, ever did? Weren't you amazed and amused? Weren't you astounded when a Raider per-



been a change in the makeup of the Raiders since they moved from Oakland to Los Angeles without Pete (Over My Dead Body) Rozelle's permission. Some people believe they now wear, well, makeup. That they have gone, uh, Hollywood. That they are softer than they used to be. That they don't scare the living you-know-what out of anybody anymore. That too many of them who used to resemble Macho Man Randy Savage are now a little more like Miss Elizabeth. That the Raiders have become a team with a pussycat quarterback, a doddering offensive line, and, worst of all, a defense with a pretty friendly disposition. When people talk about mean now, they talk about the Chicago Bears. Which maybe is good. Maybe mean shouldn't matter. Maybe all mean means is that other teams are afraid of you. The thing is, though, nobody would mind if the Raiders were as sweet as the Huxtable family, so long as they went out there every Sunday and won the game. And that, Raider love-haters, just ain't been happening.

Oh, they haven't turned into Tampa Bay or anything like that. But you know something is up—make that down—when the Raiders are choosing sixth in the first round of the NFL draft. They weren't choosing sixth because Al Davis had made a couple of his "Call Me Crazy Al Because My Prices Are



Davis still has the bark, but what happened to the bite?

Insane!" deals. They were choosing sixth because the team was bad enough to drive its coach right into the Tom Flores Hyundai business, full time. Mike Shanahan, a man who has never been a pro head coach, a man who is five years younger than Jim Plunkett,

Could Shanahan, the new coach, have handled the old Raiders?



sonally paralyzed another pro football colleague, then added insult to serious injury by doing an autobiography in which he bragged of being known as "Assassin?" Wasn't it wild when a big old Raider took a postgame poke at a little weenie who worked in the Patriots' front office? Weren't they the National Football League team that was one step removed from the World Wrestling Federation? Didn't they resemble the cast of a Mad Max movie? Weren't they the kind of football players who would have gone up to Hell's Angels in a saloon and said something bad about their mamas?

Yes, they were.

Some people, though, believe there has

a man who coordinated the offense of the enemy Denver Broncos, was hired by Al Davis to come steer the ship. That's how desperate times are—to take from Denver! It's, well, sacrilege. Next thing you know, the Raiderette cheerleaders, or, as they like to call themselves, Football's Fabulous Females, will be applying for jobs selling Cokes at the concession stands in Green Bay. Next thing you know, Wickedly Wonderful Wanda will want to be fixed up with an offensive tackle from Buffalo. The shame, the shame. Hiring a coach from Denver. Even the Raider insignia was so ashamed, he put eyepatches over both eyes.

Shanahan, now the youngest head coach in the league, is a former quarterback from that famous football factory Eastern Illinois University; he once got whacked while running an option play during a spring scrimmage his senior year, and ended up having a kidney removed. "I was in critical condition," he recalled one day this past spring, after a rookie-camp practice in El Segundo. "A priest even read me the last rites." When Shanahan walked out of that hospital, his playing career was over, but a coach was born. By the time he returned to the Charleston, Ill., campus a few years later, Shanahan was proud to say that he was the youngest offensive coordinator of any college football program in the country. He was a prodigy, no doubt about it. Yet, the thought of this guy becoming head coach of the NFL

Raiders by age 35 was unthinkable. The Raiders were the men-monsters of Al Davis and John Madden and Tom Flores. You didn't coach them; you tamed them. You left your whistle on the kitchen table and brought your chair and whip. You didn't give them Gatorade; you tossed them raw meat.

So, what happened? Why did the Raiders stop thinking love was a hurtin' thing? Why the big falloff? They certainly maintained their reputation throughout the early 1980s. "Our first goal at Denver," Shanahan said, "was to win the championship, but our next biggest goal was beating the Raiders. They were the team you loved to beat. Call it what you want—mystique, tradition, reputation. The bottom line is that a win over the Raiders was something that made you feel good the rest of the week. Sometimes the rest of the year."

As their new coach, Shanahan has his work cut out for him. The Raiders are on the skids. To help, Davis wrangled them three picks in the first round of the NFL draft. Add that to a bunch of aging bulls, tough and ornery but no longer scary, and we shall see what we shall see. The good news is that the Raiders still have a dream-team backfield of Bo Jackson and Marcus Allen, as soon as Jackson can get away from running out infield singles and get back to running over Brian Bosworth's earring. The bad news, as of early summer, is that the Raiders continue to count on quarterbacks that might have trouble winning prizes at Punt, Pass & Kick competitions.

Can the Raiders come back to terrorize the AFC? Will it help any when they get away (perhaps in a few years) from the colorful old Coliseum and get out there in that Irwindale gravel pit of theirs, also known as Fred Flintstone Memorial Stadium? Is it true that the man the Raiders really miss is not a coach or a quarterback but Mr. Hang 'Em High, Ray Guy? Were all those draft choices worth the cost of Sean Jones and Dokie Williams? Will Napoleon McCallum ever return from ship to shore? Will Shanahan know and expose the hidden vulnerabilities of the Broncos, or is Denver so good that it will once again march to the AFC championship and then meet the Minnesota Vikings in a Super Bowl that will almost certainly end in a scoreless tie?

These and many other questions will be answered as soon as the Raiders take the field. Maybe everything will get back to normal. (That is, abnormal.) Somehow, Al Davis has managed to keep his public cool, even after last year's sorry 5-10 record. The quarterback controversy lives on, though; ticket-holders wonder if it is true that nobody else around the league is willing to help Al Davis in a crisis. Nobody quite knows why Neil Lomax did not end up with the Raiders,

or why Kelly Stouffer preferred Seattle, or why even the Steve DeBergs of the world seem to land in every NFL city except this one. All that is known is that the Raiders went with a starting quarterback as green as Rusty Hilger a year ago, and they are going with a head coach as green as Shanahan this time. These sure don't look like the Raiders of old. George Blanda, pick up the white courtesy telephone. Help. Emergency.

THE NEW COACH

The Raiders do fool you. They placed a bunch of phone calls in the early evening of January 19, a Tuesday, to say that they were having a press conference at an airport hotel the next morning, so drop on by. For what? For "a significant announcement." Like what? "We can't say. Just come on out, and bring a camera."

Well. Speculation had already risen that Tom Flores was gone. Either retiring or being retired. So that part was no hush-hush secret. But who would the new coach be? Was he going to be there the next day? Why else would "bring a camera" be part of the instructions? We already had plenty of pictures of Tom Flores. No, the new guy must already be in town. Quick, let's call all the hotels. Hey, maybe he's black. Sure, a black guy for the black and silver? Hey, maybe he's silver. Who knows with Al Davis? Art Shell's name came up. Willie Brown's. Tony Dungy's. Dennis Green's. Wait, maybe this isn't even a coaching thing. Maybe it's a press conference to announce that Irwindale has fallen through, and that the Raiders were now moving to Big Sur, or Vegas, or Universal Studios, or Maui, or Trump Tower in New York.

No, it was the coach, all right. Flores was stepping down. Voluntarily, Davis stressed. A search for a new coach would begin immediately. And thank you to all you old media pals from San Francisco and Oakland who scrambled all the way down here to Los Angeles overnight. Sorry we couldn't tip you on the phone.

In the weeks to come, the hunt for a new Raiders coach was as nearly as complicated as UCLA's search for a new basketball coach, or George McGovern's search for a vice presidential nominee. One by one, the black candidates fell by the wayside. Experience obviously was not a factor, seeing as how the coach Davis eventually hired had gotten most of his experience on the college campuses of Northern Arizona, Eastern Illinois, Oklahoma, Florida, and Minnesota. First, though, Dan Henning's name surfaced. He was scratched. Then, Joe Bugel—he was scratched also. Ditto for Jerry Rhome. Half the Washington Redskins' staff was considered. Everybody in D.C. but Dexter Manley and Christine Brennan got a call. Finally, exactly a month after Flores hung up his

Bo's irreverent greatness forges a link to the past.



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skull and crossbones, Shanahan, the only NFL head coach under 40, got the job.

Dan Reeves and Denver hated to lose Shanahan, almost as much as they hated losing back-to-back Super Bowls. Shanahan, himself, had mixed feelings about the Bronco experience. He was proud of having gotten to the Super Bowl, and sick about not winning it. "Losing the game, it just eats at you. If it doesn't eat at you, maybe you're in the wrong profession. Because in football, there's no second place. You don't set out to be No. 2. I'm not here to try to make the Los Angeles Raiders No. 2."

There sure were times last season when the Raiders looked like No. 2. If you get our drift.

THE NEW STADIUM

Out there in the foothills, where the air matches the color scheme of silver and black, Irwindale, 15 miles west of the Coliseum, is getting ready. The digging goes on. Raider Crater is going to be a reality. The Coliseum lease does not expire until 1994, and the people who run the stadium commission are new people, by and large, but all systems remain in Irwindale, garden of stone. The Raiders have opened offices there, including lovely silver sofas with black pillows. This is no bluff, they say. This is very real. In Irwindale, they say, we will sell out all our games, and there will be no more local blackouts on TV, just because the Coliseum is too big to be sold out unless Springsteen promised to come there to mud-wrestle Madonna.

The team doesn't actually figure to play out there in the dusty San Gabriel Valley for three more years. But according to John Herrera, a Raider senior executive who now works out of the Irwindale offices, the team is taking every necessary step, every precaution, to make this place feel like home. They even have taken care of environmental matters. "We've left no stone unturned, literally," Herrera said. "They've found some birds nesting there [near the stadium site], and some alluvial shrub that's fairly rare. Some little rodents, lizards . . ." Good thing today's Raiders are not like yesterday's Raiders. Otherwise, that would have sounded like a call to lunch.

THE NEW RECRUITS

Because they saw how the draft was shaping up, and that Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown of Notre Dame was going to be available to them, the Raiders decided they had more than enough wide receivers on their hands, so they said "get along, li'l Dokie" and sent Williams to the 49ers in exchange for San Francisco's top pick, which was used to take defensive end Scott Davis. They made another deal with Houston, sending veteran defensive lineman Sean Jones on his way, and used the Oilers' top

HEISMAN AND HE-MAN

"ANYBODY SURPRISED?" MIKE Shanahan wanted to know. The Raiders had just made their last pick of the first round at the NFL's April 25 college player draft.

Surprised? Well, no. Nothing this football franchise does is much of a surprise anymore. This is the team that takes Bo Jackson after he already has chosen horsehide over pigskin. This is the team that takes Napoleon McCallum after it appears to be anchors aweigh. This is the team that uses its only pick of the first two rounds of the 1986 draft to take defensive end Bob Buczkowski, instead of available people such as Ernest Givins, Webster Slaughter, Rueben Mayes, Tom Newberry, John Offerdahl, and Dino Hackett.

No, nothing the Raiders do surprises you. They have bounced from Oakland to Los Angeles to Irwindale, and probably will be the first football team on the moon, soon as Pete Rozelle and Tex Schramm permit interplanetary play.

Still, you can hardly blame Shanahan for at least wondering if anyone was surprised. After all, the guy's new in town, and young. He'll learn. Besides, if that had been any other NFL team that Sunday, eyebrows would have gone up, jaws down. The Raiders did make some fancy moves. While Atlanta was busy taking Aundray's Auburn Bruce—or do we have things backward, as the Falcons themselves usually do?—and while New Orleans was taking Ironhead or Ironside or Ironweed or whatever his name is, and while the alliterative additions of Bennie Blades, Gaston Green, and Sterling Sharpe were being enunciated elsewhere, the Raiders were grabbing just about every good college player left, except maybe that Texas A&M dude who swiped Tim Brown's towel.

For starters, they took Tim Brown.

Well, maybe not for starters. "I can't promise you he'll start," Shanahan said. "I never count on a rookie coming in and being an impact player. Hopefully, he can contribute."

Hopefully, he'd better contribute. You do not draft a Heisman winner and expect him only to run back kicks and run out for doughnuts when the veterans get hungry. Speaking for himself, Brown still couldn't figure why a team picking sixth in the draft could still get him. "People who'd spent ten weeks building me up, calling me the best thing since cotton candy, saw me have one bad game [against Miami] and all of a

sudden, I'm a bad guy," he said.

So, Tim, why did you pursue that towel thief at the Cotton Bowl—to put some Fighting back into the Irish?

"Hey, what would you do if somebody came up and stole your tape recorder?" Brown asked. "Are you going to let him have it? If so, that shows something about you, not about me."

"I've been telling people, I think the Raiders are trying to *change* their image by drafting me. Everybody knows I'm the good all-American boy."

We all know that's what the Raiders require.

Well, they usually draft Americans, anyway. And, so far many of them have been boys.

As for the good part . . .

Meet Scott Davis, then decide for yourself. Davis is a 6'7", 270-pound defensive end from the University of Illinois.

Former coaches and teammates will tell you Davis is all right. Howard Tippet, now special-teams coach of the Packers, was defensive coordinator at Illinois last season, and insists: "Scott Davis is not a bad guy. He's a good kid."

Those who disagree include three citizens who filed battery charges against Davis with police—two of them women. From a 1987 incident, Davis pleaded guilty to striking a man in the face, was put under court supervision for twelve months, and paid a fine. This February, a female student claimed Davis slapped her face, for which he faced a June jury trial. Then, the morning before the NFL draft, Davis allegedly grabbed a 19-year-old woman by the neck and hurled her to the floor of a campus bar. She told police she got up and slapped him, only to be thrown back down.

Davis called it "a misunderstanding." The woman's mother wrote a letter to a Los Angeles sportswriter that read, in part: [My daughter] was injured and has pain, but probably the worst pain is feeling so victimized by this boy, who is a perfect stranger. I suppose he will get a slap on the hands and a small fine because he's going to be a Raider. Heaven help the girl who marries him."

Since Al Davis and the Raiders already have given refuge to scoundrels and rascals ranging from John Matuszak to Jack Tatum to Ken Stabler, we know that, as in the West a century ago, good guys don't always wear black. Good players sometimes do. Whether these guys are bad guys or good guys, well, the jury's still out. □ —M. D.

draft choice to nab Terry McDaniel, a defensive back from Tennessee. That old Jedi, Lester Hayes, is getting older than Obi Wan Kenobi, we're afraid, so the Raiders have a primary need to help the secondary.

In Scott Davis (no relation to Al, except maybe spiritually), the Raiders got a big old bear of a defensive end from the University of Illinois, who originally was projected as a much higher choice. He wound up going 25th

overall, with everyone from writer Paul Zimmerman to Mel Kiper of ESPN carrying on about how overrated he was. Scott Davis said: "All that means is I'm just going to have to prove 'em wrong, right?" Right. It figures to take some time, though. Davis is seen as a raw talent, a project. He wasn't even the most valuable defensive lineman of his college team.

A defensive end who might be ready

sooner is Tim Rother from Nebraska, the Raiders' fourth-round pick. If only he could play quarterback.

THE OLD GUARD

Howie Long, the killer lineman with the Li'l Abner look and demeanor off the field, is back to lead the defensive attack. He still misses having Lyle Alzado around to keep the defense on its toes, or, to put it more accurately, to keep the offense on its toes. Alzado, alone, was enough to intimidate offensive linemen, but with Long nearby, he was able to take 'em on one at a time. Matt Millen, Bill Pickel, and others are still around to give Long allies, but the Raiders defense isn't the death squad that it used to be.

The offense still has Todd Christensen, the eloquent tight end, and Marcus Allen, who graciously accepted the presence of Bo Jackson by being willing to line up at the fullback position once in a while. The offense also still has Rusty Hilger and Steve Beuerlein, who do the passing. That is, they pass for quarterbacks.

The Raider kicking game is OK, but the punting hasn't been the same since Ray Guy went back to Dixie. The Raiders thought about drafting Tom Tupa, the quarterback from Ohio State, as a punter. Maybe it should have been the other way around. Anyway, Phoenix got him first.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

As for Bo Jackson, tailback-outfielder, he continues to hammer homers and whiff for the Kansas City Royals, but expects to drop by Raider camp in October, same as last year. "For some crazy reason," George Brett of the Royals said, "after Bo decided to play football, the fans in Kansas City turned against him. A lot of players turned against him, too. But I thought it was great. It gave me an extra attraction to go to Raider games."

Some fans needed something extra. The Raiders without Bo Jackson lacked excitement, lacked thrills and spills. When his highness showed up at the Kingdome in Seattle last year and left his footprints on Bosworth's head, the whole country knew that the Raiders had something special. They used to take that for granted, but not anymore. If the Raiders ever get Bo to play all year round, they will be the most talked-about team in pro football again. Until then, life is the pits, and so is Irwindale, and nobody's talking about the Raiders, not even Irwin.

MIKE DOWNEY (now known as "Old Softy") is a Los Angeles sports columnist who would travel to Oakland every weekend to watch Ben Davidson and the old gang play again. Mike's last I.S. piece was a Super Bowl preview.

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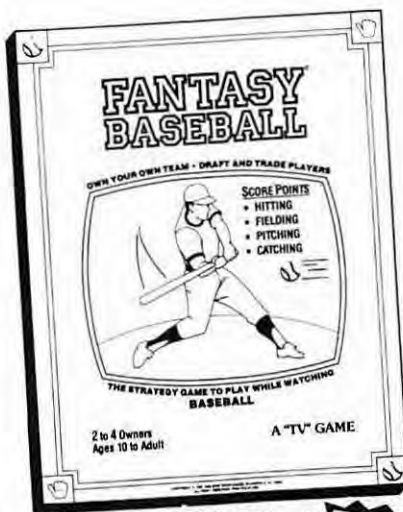
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BALANCED BACKFIELDS

Eric Dickerson is the name that comes to mind when people think about the Indianapolis Colts ground game. But there is more to the Colts rushing attack than Dickerson. Albert Bentley carried the ball 142 times for 631 yards last season, the ninth best total in the AFC. Together, Dickerson and Bentley rushed for 1,919 yards, easily the most yards by two players in the same backfield. Listed below are the 10 most productive running back tandems in the NFL last season. (Both backs must have each gained a minimum of 400 yards.)

Rank	Team	No. 1 Running Back (Yards)	No. 2 Running Back (Yards)	Total
1.	Indianapolis Colts	Eric Dickerson (1,288)	Albert Bentley (631)	1,919
2.	Seattle Seahawks	Curt Warner (985)	John L. Williams (500)	1,485
3.	New Orleans Saints	Rueben Mayes (917)	Dalton Hilliard (508)	1,425
4.	Dallas Cowboys	Herschel Walker (891)	Tony Dorsett (456)	1,347
5.	Los Angeles Raiders	Marcus Allen (754)	Bo Jackson (554)	1,308
6.	St. Louis Cardinals	Stump Mitchell (781)	Earl Ferrell (512)	1,293
7.	Pittsburgh Steelers	Earnest Jackson (696)	Frank Pollard (536)	1,232
8.	Cleveland Browns	Kevin Mack (735)	Earnest Byner (432)	1,167
9.	Kansas City Chiefs	Christian Okoye (660)	Herman Heard (466)	1,126
10.	Chicago Bears	Neal Anderson (586)	Walter Payton (533)	1,119

By Mark E. Van Overloop

DYNAMIC DUOS

Houston's Drew Hill (989) and Ernest Givins (933) were the only receivers on the same team to each gain at least 800 yards receiving in 1987. Combined, the two gained 1,922 yards through the air, the best total by two receivers on the same team. Listed below are the top 10 receiving tandems in the NFL last season. (Both receivers must have each gained a minimum of 500 yards.)

Rank	Team	No. 1 Receiver (Yards)	No. 2 Receiver (Yards)	Total Yards
1.	Houston Oilers	Drew Hill (989)	Ernest Givins (933)	1,922
2.	St. Louis Cardinals	J. T. Smith (1,117)	Roy Green (731)	1,848
3.	Kansas City Chiefs	Carlos Carson (1,044)	Stephone Paige (697)	1,741
4.	Washington Redskins	Gary Clark (1,066)	Ricky Sanders (630)	1,696
5.	Los Angeles Raiders	James Lofton (880)	Todd Christensen (663)	1,543
6.	Buffalo Bills	Andre Reed (752)	Chris Burkett (765)	1,517
7.	Cleveland Browns	Webster Slaughter (806)	Brian Brennan (607)	1,413
8.	New York Giants	Mark Bavaro (867)	Lionel Manuel (545)	1,412
9.	Dallas Cowboys	Herschel Walker (715)	Mike Renfro (662)	1,377
10.	Miami Dolphins	Mark Clayton (776)	Mark Duper (597)	1,373

By Mark E. Van Overloop

PRODUCTIVE PASSERS

No matter how you look at it, Dan Marino has been the NFL's most productive quarterback over the last three seasons (1985-87). During that time, the Miami quarterback has passed for more yards (12,128) and more touchdowns (100) than any other quarterback in the NFL. Listed below are the top 10 quarterbacks in passing yardage and touchdowns over the past three seasons.

Passing Yardage					Touchdowns				
Rank	Player, Team	1985	1986	1987	Total	Rank	Player, Team	1985	Total
1.	Dan Marino, Dolphins	4,137	4,746	3,245	12,128	1.	Dan Marino, Dolphins	30	100
2.	Boomer Esiason, Bengals	3,443	3,959	3,321	10,723	2.	Dave Krieg, Seahawks	27	71
3.	John Elway, Broncos	3,891	3,485	3,198	10,574	3.	Boomer Esiason, Bengals	27	67
4.	Ken O'Brien, Jets	3,888	3,690	2,696	10,274	4.	Joe Montana, 49ers	27	66
5.	Phil Simms, Giants	3,829	3,487	2,230	9,546	5.	Ken O'Brien, Jets	25	63
6.	Dan Fouts, Chargers	3,638	3,031	2,517	9,186	6.	John Elway, Broncos	22	60
7.	Neil Lomax, Cardinals	3,214	2,583	3,387	9,184	7.	Phil Simms, Giants	22	60
8.	Warren Moon, Oilers	2,709	3,489	2,806	9,004	8.	Neil Lomax, Cardinals	18	55
9.	Joe Montana, 49ers	3,653	2,236	3,054	8,943	9.	Dan Fouts, Chargers	27	53
10.	Dave Krieg, Seahawks	3,602	2,921	2,131	8,654	10.	Warren Moon, Oilers	15	49

By Mark E. Van Overloop

PREDICTABLE OFFENSES

When the San Diego Chargers had the ball on offense last year, there wasn't much question about what they were going to do with it. San Diego gained 4,588 total yards last season, and 71.5% (3,280 yards) came through the air, the highest percentage in the league. At the other end of the spectrum, the Pittsburgh Steelers gained only 51.4% of their yards by passing the ball. Pittsburgh's percentage of rushing yards to total yards led the NFL. It is interesting to note that the six teams with the highest percentage of passing yards did not reach the playoffs last year. Listed below are the teams that gained the highest percentage of their offensive yards through the air and on the ground.

Passing				
Rank	Team	Total Yards	Passing Yards	Pct.
1.	San Diego Chargers	4,588	3,280	.715
2.	Miami Dolphins	5,538	3,876	.700
3.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	4,381	3,016	.688
4.	New York Giants	4,659	3,202	.687
5.	Atlanta Falcons	4,066	2,768	.681
6.	Detroit Lions	4,391	2,956	.673
7.	Cleveland Browns	5,200	3,455	.664

Rushing				
Rank	Team	Total Yards	Rushing Yards	Pct.
1.	Pittsburgh Steelers	4,410	2,144	.486
2.	Los Angeles Rams	4,651	2,097	.451
3.	New Orleans Saints	4,964	2,190	.441
4.	Indianapolis Colts	4,995	2,143	.429
5.	Seattle Seahawks	4,735	2,023	.427
6.	Los Angeles Raiders	5,267	2,197	.417
7.	Minnesota Vikings	4,809	1,983	.412

By Anthony A. Rau

POWERFUL PROGRAMS

One method of measuring the success of a college football program is to look at the number of times a team has finished a season in the Top 10 of the final Associated Press poll. Using that standard, Nebraska has been the most successful college football team over the past decade. The Cornhuskers have finished in the Top 10 eight times since 1978. Below is a chart showing all the teams that have finished in the final AP Top 10 at least twice during the last 10 years.

Rank	School (Times in Top 10)	1978	'79	'80	'81	'82	'83	'84	'85	'86	'87
1.	Nebraska (8)	8	9	7	—	3	2	4	—	5	6
2.	Oklahoma (7)	3	3	3	—	—	6	1	3	3	—
3.	Penn State (6)	—	8	3	1	—	—	3	1	—	—
4.	Alabama (5)	1	6	7	—	—	—	—	9	—	—
	Miami (5)	—	—	8	—	1	—	9	2	1	—
	Michigan (5)	—	4	—	—	8	—	2	8	—	—
7.	Georgia (4)	—	1	6	4	4	—	—	—	—	—
	Pittsburgh (4)	—	7	2	4	10	—	—	—	—	—
	UCLA (4)	—	—	—	—	5	—	9	7	—	9
10.	Auburn (3)	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	6	7
	Clemson (3)	—	—	1	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Florida (3)	—	—	—	—	6	3	5	—	—	—
	Florida State (3)	—	6	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
	Ohio State (3)	—	4	—	—	9	—	—	7	—	—
	Southern California (3)	2	2	—	—	—	10	—	—	—	—
	Southern Methodist (3)	—	—	5	2	—	8	—	—	—	—
	Texas (3)	9	—	2	—	5	—	—	—	—	—
	Washington (3)	—	—	10	7	—	2	—	—	—	—
19.	Arizona State (2)	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	4	—	—
	Arkansas (2)	—	8	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	—
	Brigham Young (2)	—	—	—	—	7	1	—	—	—	—
	Houston (2)	10	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Louisiana State (2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	5	—
	North Carolina (2)	—	10	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Notre Dame (2)	7	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Texas A&M (2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	10

By Anthony A. Rau

THE GOOD DOCTOR

During a brawl against the Philadelphia Phillies, outfielder Albert Hall of the Atlanta Braves had to be physically restrained by a couple of Phillies, then a third, then finally a fourth. He must be pretty tough. What do you think?

I.R., BELFAST, MAINE

Well, as the Beatles once sang on their "Sgt. Pepper" album, now they know how many Phils it takes to hold Albert Hall.

Baltimore got off to a bad start this baseball season. Do you think the Orioles will be bad for a lot of years to come? I bet you're like me, and believe the O's will bounce back next season.

B.O., LISBON, MD.

I think Mr. Bill put it best when he said: "O-O-O-O-O, NO-O-O-O-O!"

Name me five things Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls cannot do.

S.L., CAIRO, ILL.

1. Dunk in both baskets at the same time. 2. Dunk free throws. 3. Get penalized for three seconds over the lane. 4. Pick out Larry Bird from the rest of the Boston players, because all Celtics look alike. 5. Trip over his tongue.

Pete Rose drew a 30-day suspension for bumping an umpire. Do you think this punishment was harsh or fair?

D.P., VAN WERT, OHIO

Pete was warned by the commissioner's office that he would be suspended for 30 days if he ever bumped an ump, 60 days if he ever slid headfirst into an ump, 90 days if he ever permitted Marge's dog to bite an ump, and 120 days if he ever drove his Porsche over an ump. By the way, a new baseball rule specifies that a manager or player will draw an immediate 30-day suspension if he ever bumps into umpires Ken Kaiser or Eric Gregg, not to mention a 30-day hospitalization.

All these balks being called by baseball umpires—who do you think put them up to this?

W.H., SIKESTON, MISS.

At the 1987 World Series, St. Louis manager Whitey Herzog insisted that Bert Blyleven of the Minnesota Twins was not coming to a full stop. If Blyleven ever gets another chance to pitch against the Cardinals, he intends to come to a full stop before every

pitch—for about 60 seconds. By the time the game's over, Whitey can forget about going home to bed. The sun will be coming up, so he can just go fishing.

Ralph Kiner, the New York Mets announcer, is known as a man of many malaprops. Do you have a particular favorite?

T.M., CORTLAND, N.Y.

I think my favorite is when he said Rookie Wilson was a candidate for Mookie of the Year.

Horse racing dolt that you are, Doctor, who did you bet on at this year's Kentucky Derby?

W.P., OWENSBORO, KY.

Same one I always bet on. Losing Colors.

What does George Steinbrenner wish there was a little less of in Yankee Stadium?

K.B., BRYAN, TEXAS

Winfield chatter.

Dominique Wilkins of the Hawks said he does not want to compete in the NBA Slam Dunk Contest anymore unless it's held on his home floor. What else does he want?

S.W., TIFTON, GA.

From now on, Dominique also is refusing to compete in any NBA playoff games unless they are held in Atlanta. Furthermore, he is refusing to take part in the All-Star Game unless all the voting for the starting lineup is done in Atlanta.

Kelly Stouffer finally ended up at quarterback for the Seattle Seahawks. How come he refused to go to Phoenix?

G.S., SUPERIOR, ARIZ.

He was afraid his frozen dinners would melt there.

Some people believe CBS-TV will make Dick Stockton and Lesley Visser the first husband-and-wife team ever to do a broadcast together. Your thoughts, please.

L.M., QUINCY, MASS.

Maybe, maybe not. From what I hear, CBS is leaning toward some other couples first, including: Kathleen and Billy Sullivan, Curry and Jeane Kirkpatrick, Gorgeous and Phyllis George, Gayle and Chauncy Gardner, James and Sweet Georgia Brown, Joan and Bud Collins, and Cheech Marin and his

wife, Connie Chung. Network execs also are hopeful that this torrid affair between Tommy Heinsohn and Madonna lasts.

Cuba pulling out of the Olympics—was that such a big deal? Did Cuba have any serious gold medal contenders?

D.K., BISMARCK, N.D.

Did they ever! There was heavyweight boxer Teekayo Stevenson, son of Teofilo. There was sprinter Antonio Guantanamera. There was outstanding swimmer Bayo Piggs. And, we can't forget the Cuban baseball team, led by outfielder Darryl Strawberry Daiquiri.

Ty Cobb supposedly slid into second base as hard as anybody, but which baserunners over the last 25 years have left the deepest marks on infielders while breaking up double plays?

E.E., KEENE, N.H.

Probably Clete Boyer and Spike Owen.

Looks as though the California Angels found a decent lefthander in this Chuck Finley. Where did they find him?

C.O., MOAB, UTAH

On a mule in Oakland. He was just riding around, juggling orange baseballs, insisting that he used to own the A's. The Angels figured the old-timer could use a job.

Michael Dean Perry, the Refrigerator's little brother, was available when the Chicago Bears picked in the NFL draft. Why didn't they grab him?

B.H., SOLANA BEACH, CALIF.

Because if they had, Mike Ditka would have had to go to a 2-9 defense.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar of the Los Angeles Lakers is how old now?

P.R., SAGINAW, MICH.

Too.

Of all the people in professional sports, who would you say is the worst-dressed?

B.L., MONTGOMERY, ALA.

I don't know, but ten bucks says he's working in the press box. ■

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201—then wait patiently.

THE FAN

By DON RICKLES

Lasorda, Linguine, And Laughs

WHEN I THINK OF baseball, I think of the Dodgers. When I think of the Dodgers, I think of Tommy Lasorda. And when I think of Tommy Lasorda, I think of one thing (well, OK, two things): pasta and describing pasta.

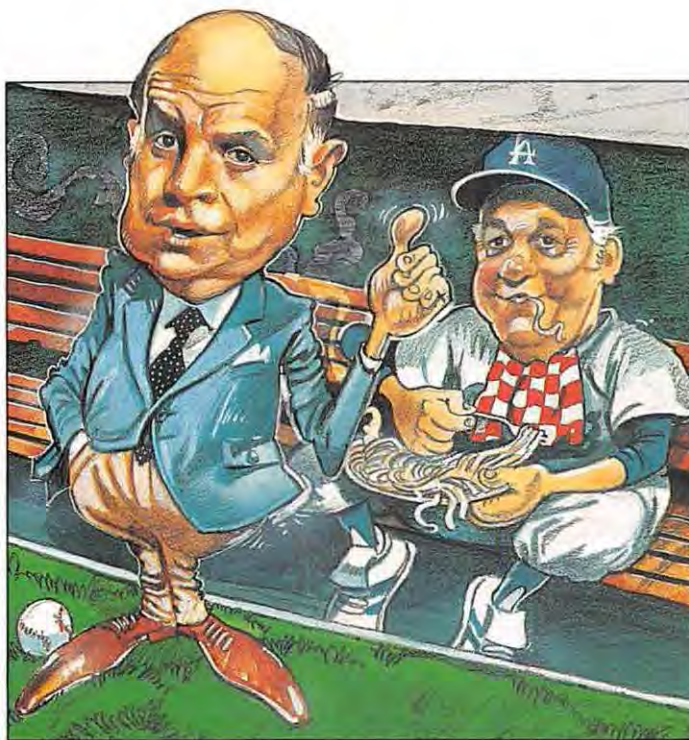
Don't worry. I'm good friends with Tommy, so it's OK for me to say this. Some people have a few extra pounds, you know? But not Lasorda. He's just plain fat. And don't let anyone tell you it's a glandular thing. The man can eat. He's not particular when he eats, either. Winning streaks, losing streaks, offseason, it doesn't matter. When the fight is between Tommy and a plate of linguine, the poor linguine doesn't stand a chance.

But listen, I'm not going to waste a lot of space here insulting Tommy Lasorda. He's liable to take some of those pictures of me off the wall in his office, and there are already 10 more pictures there of Sinatra than of me. At least, I think those are pictures of me. Either me or Redford. Hard to tell.

I'll tell you, it's fun following the Dodgers because I know so many of the players. Lasorda used to invite me into the locker room before every season to kind of rib the players—you know, insult their mothers, question their manhood, fun stuff. They knew I was just kidding around. Kinda like they knew Patton was.

Anyway, now I can't go in the clubhouse anymore, nor can any other nonplayer. The commissioner changed the rules. Maybe he was worried about gamblers getting to the players or whatever. So the last few years, Lasorda brings the players out from the dressing quarters to a reception area and I give 'em heck there.

If the Dodgers ever win the pennant



'Some people have a few extra pounds, you know? But not Lasorda. He's just plain fat. The man can eat. He's not particular when he eats, either.'

again, I'll claim that it was my words that inspired them to great heights. As it is, it seems like all I'm doing is scaring them to death. One talk from me and they all fold up their tent for the season. At least this year Peter O'Malley gave me a whole new crop of players to psych out.

Now Lasorda, there's a guy I can't intimidate. The man is tough. Week-old fettuccine isn't as tough as Tommy. I met him eight, 10 years ago when he was with the team at their spring training complex in Vero Beach, Fla. I was working a theater in Florida and he took the whole team to see me.

We liked each other from day one. He's a very funny guy in his own right and a great storyteller. His wife and my wife hit it off real well, too. Plus, he was friendly with Sinatra and I think an awful lot of Frank. I finally started buying Dodgers season tickets, and whenever I'm in town I go to the ballpark and say hi to Tommy. He usually belches back.

In all seriousness, I have great respect for baseball managers like Lasorda. Dealing with 24 egos isn't easy. You have to be a great motivator and have a gift for making sure the

guys keep their minds into the game every day. You also have to make sure your players get along with each other, which ain't always easy. A manager needs to be a diplomat and a teacher.

Lasorda's lucky because he acts like a teacher but doesn't get paid like one. I mean, I don't know too many teachers who can afford to open their own restaurant like he has. I just wish the guy would sell some of the damn food instead of taking it all to the stadium with him. Don't stadiums stock their own chow anymore?

I've been into baseball since I was a kid in New York. But for some reason, the Yankees never did it for me. My team was always the Giants. As I got older, they were led by Willie Mays and became really exciting to watch. Then they moved to San Francisco. Hockey pucks. I've never forgiven them.

But holding that grudge didn't stop me from moving out to the West Coast myself. I've been in Los Angeles now for about 28 years. I still go on the road performing for maybe 18, 19 weeks a year.

The cities where I generally perform—Vegas, Tahoe, Atlantic City—don't have very good baseball, but hey, I survive with cable TV. Most nights there are three or four games on at a time. It gives me a stiff neck to shift between all of those TV sets at once, but it's worth it.

Have I told you yet about my relationship with Tommy Lasorda? Oh, so I have.

You have to understand that name-dropping is sort of a second career for me. For Lasorda, too. It's easier than hitting a baseball but not quite as fulfilling as, say, witnessing a Lasorda feeding. That's like watching Leonard Bernstein conduct the New York Philharmonic.

DON RICKLES is a regular on the hotel showroom stages of Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Reno, and Lake Tahoe. He and Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda are said to have been brothers in a former life.